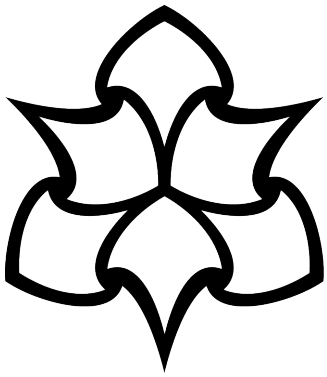

INDEPENDENT LIBRARIES
AND
CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

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PhD 2018

INDEPENDENT LIBRARIES AND CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Manchester Metropolitan University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Languages, Information and Communications

Manchester Metropolitan University

in collaboration with The Portico Library

November 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisors Jennifer Rowley and Jillian Griffiths for their guidance and support in completing this thesis.

I am also extremely grateful to Emma Marigliano and all at The Portico Library and rest of the ILA and MLG libraries for their enthusiasm and involvement in the research.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends, especially Peter, Marisa, and Nadine Loach, Jessica Adams, Ellie Buchdahl, Tamara Greaves, Sarah Hindson, Carla Jacks, Stephanie Pattison, Sally Shuttlewood, and Fran and Nesta Slater for their encouragement, patience, and support over the past four years, without which this work would not have been possible.

ABSTRACT

This thesis initially set out to explore how heritage can be sustained in independent libraries. Noting a lack of sustainability research in the independent library sector, the remit of the study was extended to consider how the concept of sustainability has been interpreted in museums, libraries, and archives (MLAs) more widely. A critical analysis of the literature in this area revealed the shortcomings of the dominant triple bottom line approach which does not put enough emphasis on the role of MLAs in sustaining heritage. However, it is subsequently argued that increasing recognition of the importance of cultural sustainability offers the opportunity to address this issue.

A Conceptual Model for the Levels of Sustainability in MLAs is proposed, seeking to provide the opportunity to further explore the relationship between MLAs and cultural sustainability. Based on the assumption that MLAs play a mediating role between the heritage that they sustain and external cultural sustainability goals, this model is used to guide the collection of data in independent libraries. Through a combination of document research and qualitative interviews a comprehensive account of the cultural heritage assets of independent libraries in the UK and USA, their potential contributions to cultural sustainability, and the challenges to achieving these contributions is established. This provides the basis for the proposal of the Conceptual Framework for Achieving Cultural Sustainability in Independent Libraries.

The contributions of the thesis are twofold. Firstly, the Conceptual Model for the Levels of Sustainability in MLAs provides a new perspective to consider the relationship between MLAs and sustainability which reasserts the importance of their role in sustaining heritage. Secondly, the Conceptual Framework for Achieving Cultural Sustainability in Independent Libraries demonstrates the complexities of the relationship between an MLA organisation and cultural sustainability beyond one-way contributions to external cultural sustainability goals. By revealing the multi-layered and often conflicting sustainability requirements of MLAs to preserve cultural heritage, ensure the effective management of the internal culture of their organisations, and demonstrate commitment to external cultural sustainability goals, it provides a new tool by which to extend our understanding of the relationship between MLAs and cultural sustainability.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter begins by introducing the research context of independent libraries and the research problem of sustaining heritage in these libraries. It then proceeds to explain the rationale behind expanding the remit of the study to consider how sustainability has been perceived in museum, library, and archive policy and research more widely. Noting the lack of emphasis on sustaining heritage in this previous body of work, the under-researched area of cultural sustainability is presented as an opportunity to develop sustainability strategies that prioritise sustaining heritage. According to this background, the research aim and objectives are then set out. The chapter concludes by providing an overview of the remaining chapters of the thesis.

1.1 Independent Libraries

On the 23rd of May 2015, *The Seattle Times* reported on plans for the opening of a new cultural institution within the city. Founded by 'local dynamo' David Brewster, Folio: The Seattle Athenaeum would be an independent library and cultural centre, providing fee paying members with access to a large collection of books, a comfortable and quiet space to read and work, and a programme of literary events; all within the setting of an attractive historic building (Gwinn, 2015).

Although Brewster's library was conceived partly in response to current concerns over public libraries functioning as 'community centers'

rather than as places ‘devoted to book lovers’, it is in fact in keeping with a long tradition of independent libraries (Gwinn, 2015). The subscription library model upon which the Seattle Athenaeum is based was particularly prominent during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, before the widespread development of government funded public library systems. During this period, an increasing thirst for knowledge and a desire for self-improvement prompted individuals to come together to establish their own libraries. Funded by the annual subscription fees paid by their members, these libraries provided individuals with the opportunity to access a wide range of resources including books, newspapers, and periodicals which, owing to the high cost of printing at the time, were often beyond most people’s budgets (Crawford, 1997).

In addition to subscription libraries, several other independent library models were also prevalent during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Industrialists set up libraries as part of mechanics’ institutes to provide their working-class employees with a means by which to improve their skills and knowledge. Wealthy individuals established privately endowed public libraries for their communities on similar philanthropic grounds. Meanwhile, catering for more socially elite circles, many literary, scientific, philosophical, and historical societies also formed their own libraries to support the specialist interests of their members.

Regardless of when, where or why these libraries were founded, what links them together and makes them ‘independent’ is the way that they are funded and governed. In comparison to academic, public, and professional libraries, they do not exist as part of any larger parent organisation, nor do

they receive any direct funding from any such organisation or from the government. Decisions over how these institutions operate are therefore made entirely by their own internal governance systems, which typically include committees made up of the library's members.

While newly founded independent libraries such as the Seattle Athenaeum are something of a novelty, a considerable number of independent libraries from earlier periods continue to exist. For example, the 33 institutions that form the membership of the Independent Libraries Association (ILA) in the UK include many institutions dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries or earlier. Indeed, the ILA's oldest member is Chetham's Library in Manchester which, having been founded in 1653, is considered to be the 'oldest public library in the English-speaking world' (Chetham's Library, 2018).

1.2 Sustaining heritage in independent libraries

As the collaborative organisation in this research, The Portico Library in Manchester provides a useful example of the cultural heritage that independent libraries preserve for their communities. Founded in 1806, it still retains its original collection which provides 'tangible insight into the Georgian and Victorian culture of Boomtown Manchester, reflecting the literary, intellectual and cultural mindset of the men who founded the Library over 200 years ago' (The Portico Library, 2018). This collection is complemented by the Library's archives which include committee receipts, minute books and correspondence that provide insights into the interests and reading habits of the Library's members, including historical figures such as

John Dalton, Peter Roget, and William Gaskell. In addition to these paper-based collections, The Portico also preserves physical artefacts in the form of the paintings and antique furniture furnishing the library, which, as a grade II* listed building designed by Thomas Harrison of Chester, can also be considered an important part of Manchester's heritage.

Independent libraries such as The Portico are clearly an important part of their communities' cultural heritage. However, owing to a continued struggle for financial stability and a lack of strategic planning into their future development, independent libraries are often not in themselves sustainable, and consequently the future of their heritage is placed at risk (Bishop and Rowley, 2012).

To ensure the future of independent libraries and their heritage, two important questions need addressing. Firstly, it is essential that we establish an overview of the cultural heritage maintained by independent libraries and its perceived value. Due to the historic perspective taken by the majority of previous research in the sector (Allan, 2013; Bowd, 2013; Crawford, 1997; Manley, 2003), to date there has been no systematic analysis of the cultural heritage currently maintained by independent libraries. Without detailed knowledge of what it is we are trying to sustain, development of suitable practices to do so would be very difficult. Furthermore, developing understanding of the value of these libraries and their cultural heritage is also essential for explaining why their survival is of importance in the first place.

Secondly, we need to consider how these libraries can best sustain themselves and their cultural heritage. There is some previous research into

how independent libraries can improve their practices, for example with regards to the preservation and conservation of collections (Fenn and Muir, 2003) or the use of digital marketing (Bishop and Rowley, 2012; Hopper, 2008). Yet such research does not take into account the complex nature of these organisations, and the numerous factors that affect their sustainability. A broader strategic approach, supported by a more holistic conceptual framework, is therefore required.

1.3 Sustainability policy and research in museums, libraries and archives

With limited research in the independent library sector, it is necessary to look more widely at research that has been conducted in similar organisations for possible approaches to addressing these questions. The broader library sector is of obvious interest. Indeed, since cuts to funding and a struggle to remain relevant in an ever-changing information marketplace have raised widespread concerns regarding the future survival of academic and public libraries (Hernon and Matthews, 2013; Lee, 2012), it is clear that sustainability is not just an issue that affects the independent sector.

In addition, since the specific focus of this research is on the preservation of heritage, it was considered pertinent to also include research from the museum and archive sectors. While there may not yet have been any research directly addressing the notion of sustainability in independent libraries, an initial review according to this wider search criteria uncovered an abundance of sustainability policy and research in the wider museum, library,

and archive sectors (hereafter MLAs) that is of specific relevance to this study.

Although it could have been possible to establish a framework of sustainable practices for independent libraries from the recommendations of previous policy and research, the focus of this body of work was found to be on improving the sustainability of MLAs according to the concept of the 'three pillars' of environmental, social, and economic sustainability derived from broader sustainable development agendas (Stylianou-Lambert et al, 2014; Jankowska and Marcum, 2010). While applying such approaches in the context of independent libraries could improve the general sustainability of the libraries as organisations, they would provide little opportunity for considering issues specifically related to sustaining their heritage.

The more recent inclusion of cultural sustainability as a 'fourth pillar' alongside the social, economic, and environmental pillars of sustainable development could however have the potential to address this issue, particularly as the protection of cultural heritage has emerged as a key 'story line' within the discourse surrounding cultural sustainability (Soini and Birkeland, 2014). Yet despite growing recognition of the importance of cultural sustainability, it remains an under-researched concept within the MLA sectors (Stylianou-Lambert et al, 2014).

1.4 Research aim and objectives

The preceding discussion has established the following key points:

With regards to independent libraries:

- There is a lack of knowledge surrounding the cultural heritage preserved by independent libraries and a lack of understanding of the value of this heritage for their communities
- There is a lack of sustainability research in independent libraries

With regards to MLA sustainability policy and research:

- Efforts to develop sustainability strategies for MLAs have so far focused on improving the environmental, social, and economic sustainability of organisations
- Cultural sustainability offers the opportunity to develop sustainability strategies that put more of an emphasis on sustaining heritage, yet research in this area remains limited

Accordingly, this study aims to bring together these two previously disparate strands of research, with the overarching aim being

'To contribute to theory and practice in relation to cultural sustainability in museums, libraries, and archives'

To achieve this aim, five research objectives have been established. The first objective is:

1. To provide a critical analysis of how sustainability has been conceptualised in the MLA sectors thus far and propose a conceptual model that embeds cultural sustainability

This objective will be achieved during the literature review process. The conceptual model that it establishes will then guide the collection of data in independent libraries and provide the basis for responding to objectives two, three, and four, which are:

2. To profile independent libraries and their cultural heritage assets in order to provide the baseline for the study and develop understanding of their perceived cultural value
3. To establish understanding of the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability
4. To consider the challenges to achieving sustainability in independent libraries at an organisational level and offer examples of best practice for overcoming these challenges

The fifth and final objective,

5. To offer recommendations for future research and suggestions for improving practice in relation to achieving cultural sustainability in independent libraries and other MLAs,

will be completed during the reflective process at the end of the study.

The benefits of conducting this research in the context of independent libraries are twofold. Firstly, by bringing the independent library sector into wider debates surrounding the issue of sustainability in MLAs, it will address the hitherto lack of research in independent libraries and ensure that it is brought in alignment with current research trends in the wider MLA sectors. Secondly, because of the lack of previous sustainability research in independent libraries, it will be possible to explore notions of sustainability

with the participants in relative isolation from established MLA sustainability strategies. Indeed, a brief survey of ILA library websites by the researcher discovered no mention of sustainability policies or initiatives. This will be especially beneficial in countering the top-down approach to sustainability that has typically been adopted by MLAs, as it will be possible to gain insight into practitioner's own perspectives of sustainability in their organisations that have not been influenced by the 'three pillars' approach derived from wider sustainable development agendas.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is comprised of six chapters. Chapter one presents an overall introduction, which identifies the research gap and explains how the study will seek to address this gap through the research aim and objectives. Chapter two will then provide a review of the literature which, according to the first objective of the research, will include an analysis of how sustainability has been conceptualised in MLAs so far and propose a model that embeds cultural sustainability. It will also outline how this model will be used to guide the collection of data in the later stages of the study.

Chapter three explains the methodology of the research and how the data was collected and analysed. Chapter four presents the research findings, which are divided into three sections according to the data collection strategy outlined in Chapter Three. The findings of the document research provide a profile of the cultural heritage maintained by independent libraries and fulfils objective two. The responses from the first stage of the interviews provide insight into the participants perspectives on the potential

contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability and thereby fulfils objective three. Lastly, the responses from the second stage of the interviews provide insight into the challenges to achieving sustainability in independent libraries as well as best practices for overcoming these challenges and thereby fulfils the fourth objective of the research.

These findings are then discussed within the context of the literature in chapter five to determine how the conceptual model has enabled understanding of the role of independent libraries and other MLAs in cultural sustainability to be taken forward. Finally, chapter six will present the overall conclusions of the research. Returning to the original aim and objectives, it summarises how each objective has been met and enabled the research aim to be achieved. The chapter also provides a critical evaluation of the study, highlighting the study's main contribution to knowledge as well as discussing the limitations of the research. Possible future research directions and implications for practice are also discussed, thus fulfilling the fifth and final research objective.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The overall aim of this chapter is to fulfil the first objective of the research, which is 'To provide a critical analysis of how sustainability has been conceptualised in the MLA sectors thus far and propose a conceptual model that embeds cultural sustainability'. The chapter begins by providing a summary of the literature on independent libraries. Confirming the lack of research regarding sustainability in independent libraries, the review adopts the rationale set out in the previous chapter and proceeds to consider how the issue of sustainability has been addressed in the wider MLA sectors.

According to the requirement of objective one to 'provide a critical analysis of how sustainability has been conceptualised in the MLA sectors thus far', a combination of policy documents and conceptual articles are first examined to demonstrate how the current emphasis on environmental, economic, and social concerns in MLA sustainability policy and research has evolved. Outlining the concerns that have been raised over the use of this approach in cultural heritage institutions, the review then proceeds to consider how the recognition of cultural sustainability as a distinct concept within wider sustainable development agendas could provide an opportunity for addressing these concerns.

Empirical research on sustainability within the MLA sectors is then examined. Despite the apparent benefits that cultural sustainability could have in the development of sustainability strategies for MLAs, research that

specifically considers cultural sustainability is found to be limited, with the focus of most studies continuing to remain on environmental, economic, and social sustainability. The few empirical studies that have been conducted are shown to either focus on the integration of cultural sustainability into museum policy without consideration of practice or are limited by their employment of a narrow definition of cultural sustainability that focuses solely on the preservation of physical cultural artefacts.

Having identified these limitations in the research related to cultural sustainability in MLAs, the analysis then moves forward to argue for a more fundamental reconsideration of the way that sustainability has been conceptualised in MLA sustainability policy and research. Based on notions derived from the broader conceptual work on sustainability, it is suggested that a distinction needs to be made between internal and external sustainability concerns. In line with this argument a new conceptual model is proposed, and the empirical research on cultural sustainability in MLAs is re-examined and mapped on to this model in order to identify further gaps in the research.

Based on notions derived from the broader conceptual work on cultural sustainability, it is contended that greater consideration should be given to the role of internal organisational culture in enabling sustainability to be possible. In addition, based on conceptual work regarding the role of heritage in cultural sustainability, it is also argued that the heritage preserved by MLAs should be placed at the core of the conceptual model. As well as enabling the lack of emphasis on sustaining heritage identified in previous

sustainability strategies to be addressed, this also ensures that ideas about cultural sustainability are sufficiently embedded into the model.

The analysis closes by proposing the Conceptual Model for the Levels of Sustainability in MLAs, providing the culmination of the work towards the first objective of the research. The chapter then concludes with an overall summary of the previous literature on MLAs and sustainability, together with an explanation of how the model will guide the collection of empirical data in the later stages of the study.

2.1 Research in independent libraries

As a niche sector, research that specifically focuses upon independent libraries is sparse. The majority of studies that have been conducted tend to take an historic perspective on the role of independent libraries in their communities (Allan, 2013; Bowd, 2013; Crawford, 1997; Manley, 2003), rather than considering their current situation and future development. Of the studies that do provide a contemporary perspective, these tend to focus on particular areas of practice, such as the preservation and conservation of collections (Fenn and Muir, 2003), the development of marketing strategies (Hopper, 2008), or the use of digital marketing (Bishop and Rowley, 2012).

While such research is of course invaluable in helping to improve the prospects of independent libraries, it does not account for the complex nature of these organisations and the numerous factors that inevitably affect their sustainability. A relatively comprehensive overview of the current situation in independent libraries is offered by Willson's (2005) study, which considers the impact that wider changes in the provision of education and

library services has had on independent libraries, how independent libraries continue to operate and survive in light of these changes, and how they can capitalise on the unique benefits that they offer their users to secure the future of their organisations.

Although Willson (2005) provides an account of the practical steps that have been taken related to funding strategies, the development of partnerships and collaborations, and the use of volunteers to ensure the continued survival of the libraries, the research does not specifically address the notion of sustainability and is not grounded in wider sustainability theory. Furthermore, it is now more than ten years since the research was conducted. For independent libraries to benefit from sustainability theory and its related concepts, it is therefore necessary to look to a broader range of collections-based institutions and to consider the research that has been occurring regarding sustainability in MLAs more widely.

2.2 The conceptualisation of sustainability in the MLA sectors

To understand how the issue of sustainability has been approached in MLAs it is necessary to first consider the notion of sustainable development in wider society. Having originated from a concern over the rapid depletion of ecological resources, sustainable development recognises that we must move away from 'exclusively economic' ideas about development to a more holistic approach (Hawkes, 2001:9). If society is to develop in a way that 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED, 1987:16), then economic growth must be balanced against not only a concern for the protection of the

natural environment, but also a concern for the social wellbeing of humanity. These three interdependent aspects of human existence are considered of equal importance in enabling society to continue to function and are commonly referred to as the three pillars of sustainability. If any one of the pillars is found to be weak, then the whole system becomes unsustainable (Figure 2.0).

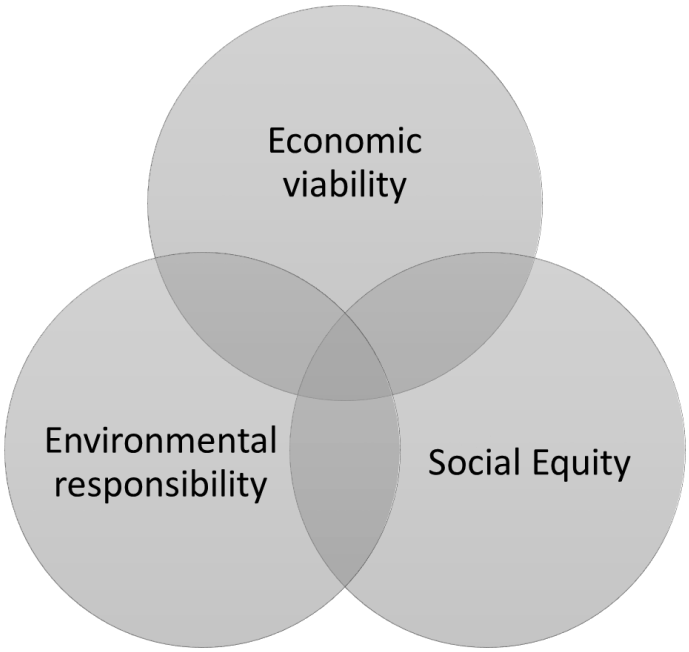

Figure 2.0. A popular depiction of the three pillars of sustainability as a Venn diagram to emphasise the interdependence of the three components. Source: Loach et al (2017)

As a result, organisations are increasingly expected to demonstrate their contributions to sustainability according to these three pillars. This has led to what is known as the 'triple bottom line' approach being adopted across many sectors, which evaluates an organisation by its impact on wider social, economic, and environmental sustainable development goals (Savitz, 2006).

As organisations that must often compete with other vital services for public funding, there has long been an awareness of the need for MLAs to be able to demonstrate the relevance and value of their work to wider society (ACE, 2011). It is therefore not surprising that the applicability of the triple bottom line to MLAs was quickly recognised and when the notion of sustainability in MLAs is discussed, it is most often in relation to the triple bottom line and the contributions of organisations to wider sustainable development goals.

There is now a wealth of policy and research to guide MLAs in becoming more sustainable organisations and institutions are increasingly expected to align their practices and missions with wider sustainable development agendas. For example, in 2008-2009, the Museums Association held a large-scale consultation on museums and sustainability, facilitated by a discussion paper that encouraged 'museums to take a "triple bottom line approach"' to sustainability' (Museums Association, 2009:3).

Similarly, the International Federation of Library Associations encourages libraries to take a 'key' role in working towards the 'economic, environmental and social' sustainable development goals in the United Nations 2030 Agenda (IFLA, 2017). Government guidelines for the archival sector meanwhile encourage institutions to work towards 'empowering and engaging communities' and 'supporting regeneration and growth' (HM Government, 2009:1), while The National Archives also provide a wealth of resources for 'Assessing the environmental impact' of 'buildings and operations' to help archival institutions meet their 'organisational commitments to sustainability' (The National Archives, 2017).

There are many beneficial effects of adopting this approach in MLAs. It enables them to demonstrate their continued relevance and value to society, which as previously noted, is often a prerequisite to being able to access public funding that is crucial to the continued survival of many MLAs. Many actions that contribute to wider sustainability goals can also have a positive effect on the sustainability of organisations themselves. For example, efforts to reduce energy consumption according to environmental goals can enable financial savings to be made and outreach projects working towards wider social wellbeing can act as a valuable marketing exercise, promoting wider awareness and helping to develop a positive image of an organisation and its work (Museums Association, 2008).

Despite these many benefits, concerns over the use of the triple bottom line within museums and other cultural heritage institutions have been raised. While the adoption of this approach may help to ensure the general future of an institution, it does not allow for adequate recognition of the unique role that MLAs play in sustaining cultural heritage for their communities. As Campolmi's (2013) analysis of how sustainability concepts have been incorporated into European governmental museum policy suggests, the focus is on linking museums to the 'sustainable common good of the community' and using the triple bottom line as a way of demonstrating 'eligibility for funding' (Campolmi, 2013:235).

Sustainability is thus regarded as 'an economic rather than a cultural issue' (Campolmi, 2013:235) despite the fact that 'Preserving but also creating culture makes museums [and by inference, many libraries and archives] core mission different from that of any other media, cultural

institutions, commercial businesses and industrial firms' (Campolmi, 2013:239). By evaluating the work of MLAs according to the triple bottom line, the unique value of their work in 'preserving' and 'creating culture' is lost as it is considered only according to its contribution to wider sustainability goals rather than according to any intrinsic value that it may hold.

This approach to evaluating culture through its wider impact rather than its intrinsic value is by no means new. Employing instrumental arguments to demonstrate 'culture's contribution to other kinds of good' has been common practice since the 1980s and has partly arisen owing to the difficulties that exist in understanding and demonstrating the value of culture itself (Holden, 2004:15). While this approach is clearly beneficial in helping cultural institutions to develop socially responsible relationships with their communities, there has been growing concern that this practice of evaluating cultural activity according to its instrumental value can have negative repercussions for the cultural sector. Indeed, as Holden (2004) suggests,

> The cultural aims and practices of organisations have been subverted. Energies have been directed into chasing funding and collecting evidence rather than achieving cultural purposes. In search for outcomes and ancillary benefits, the essence of culture has been lost. (p.20)

Being based upon demonstrating wider impact on social, economic, and environmental concerns, use of the triple bottom line when considering the issue of sustainability in MLAs can be seen to reinforce this approach to evaluating cultural activity through its instrumental value. It is therefore

arguable that meeting the targets of funders and demonstrating value according to these policy agendas can have negative repercussions such as those suggested by Holden (2004). Indeed, as Anderson (2009: 6) suggests, working towards such policy agendas can even lead to the 'acquisition, preservation, and research' of collections becoming 'considered subordinate' to these other 'aims', with the continuity and development of heritage collections suffering as a result.

2.3 Cultural Sustainability as the fourth pillar

Recent changes within the sustainable development field have the potential to develop a wider appreciation and understanding of the unique role that MLAs play in sustaining cultural heritage. Cultural sustainability, originally considered as a component of social sustainability, is now often regarded as a distinct component of equal importance to other sustainability concerns. Indeed, many sustainable development models now depict culture as the 'fourth pillar', situated alongside social, economic, and environmental concerns (Hawkes 2001:25; Figure 2.1).

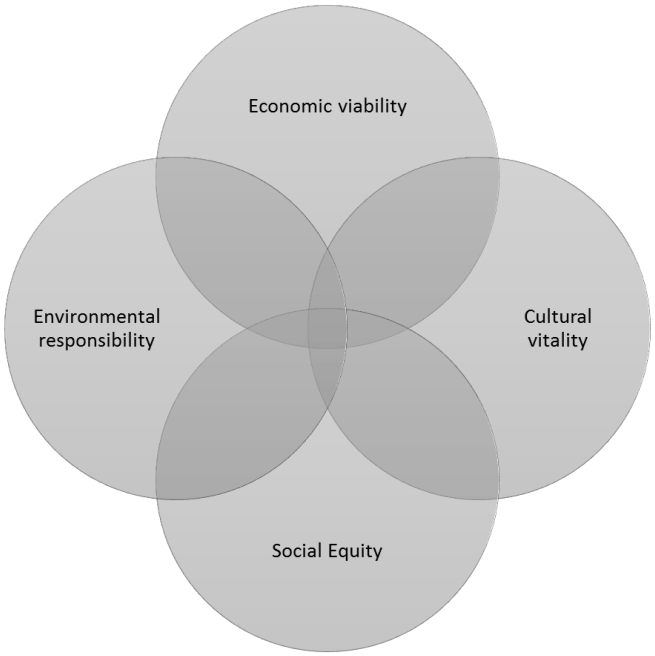

Figure 2.1. A depiction of the four pillars of sustainability. Source: Loach et al (2017)

Defining exactly what we mean by 'culture' has long been a difficult task. Definitions of the term have changed greatly over the centuries and vary considerably according to the discipline from which it is approached (Barthel-Bouchier, 2013), causing much debate amongst cultural theorists (see, for example, works by Roland Barthes, Terry Eagleton, and Raymond Williams). Culture can of course refer to 'intellectual and creative products', such as those which MLAs work to conserve and produce (CIDA, 2000:1). However, it can also refer to 'the beliefs and practices' of a society, being part of its 'fabric' and shaping the way that 'things are done and our understanding of why this should be so' (CIDA, 2000:1).

This second definition would seem to support the thesis that culture is essential for a sustainable society to be possible. Social cohesion depends upon the shared 'patterns of thought and behaviour, values, and beliefs' (Barthel-Bouchier, 2013:11) that culture encompasses. It is also through

culture that we learn about ‘economic, social, and environmental issues’, and develop our ideas about how society should ‘address’ them (Duxbury and Gillette, 2007:10). From this perspective, while culture may have struggled to achieve validation alongside other sustainability goals, it can in fact be considered fundamental to the entire sustainability movement. Culture can be considered not only integral to the existence of a society or social group in the first place but can also be seen to provide us with the means of ‘comprehending’ and ‘implementing’ the changes in our ideas about living that are required to enable a more sustainable society to be possible (Hawkes, 2001:25).

There is still much work required to fully understand and develop the notion of cultural sustainability. Furthermore, owing to the ‘iterative and reciprocal relationship’ in which culture constructs society but society also shapes culture’, there are still many difficulties that exist in trying to separate cultural and social sustainability concerns (Dessein et al, 2015:25).

Nevertheless, certain concerns have been identified that can be considered key to enabling cultural sustainability. Soini and Birkeland’s (2014) analysis of the scientific discourse surrounding cultural sustainability suggests that while it may still be ‘at an early stage in its conceptual evolution’, the need for the protection of cultural heritage and the strengthening of cultural vitality have emerged as two key ‘story lines’ within the literature surrounding the term (p.221). These concerns, it is proposed, can most clearly be seen to form the ‘fourth, cultural pillar of sustainability parallel to ecological, social, and economic sustainability’ (p.220).

This means that the protection of cultural heritage assets, which are a core means by which cultural values and meanings are transferred, is now considered by UNESCO (2013) to be crucial for cultural sustainability to be possible. These assets include both tangible forms of cultural heritage, including ‘historical buildings and monuments’ (Soini and Birkeland, 2014:216) and ‘collections of moveable items within sites, museums, cultural properties and archives’ (UNESCO, 2013:2), and intangible cultural heritage, such as ‘knowledge and traditions’ (Soini and Birkeland, 2014:216).

The fundamental importance of cultural heritage to enabling cultural sustainability is further demonstrated by Throsby (1997, 2008, 2011), who likens the need to protect cultural heritage assets for cultural sustainability to be possible to the need to protect ecological resources for environmental sustainability to be possible. Like ecological resources, cultural heritage can be considered as a ‘stock’ of ‘capital’ which is ‘inherited from our forebears and which we pass on to future generations’, but which must equally be utilised for the benefit of the current population. (Throsby, 1997:15).

Just as an acute awareness of complex ecosystems and the sustainable management of ecological resources underpins environmental sustainability, so there would seem to be an increasing recognition that a similar approach is required for our cultural heritage assets in order for cultural sustainability to be possible. If culture is as fundamental to enabling a sustainable society as has been suggested, then more strategic methods of sustainably managing cultural heritage, as a key component of the fourth pillar, would certainly seem necessary.

2.4 The incorporation of cultural sustainability into MLA sustainability models

As institutions that play a central role in preserving and providing access to such cultural assets, this would seem a prime opportunity for MLAs to demonstrate the value of their work in sustaining heritage beyond its impact on social, economic, and environmental concerns. Yet despite this, the focus of sustainability research within museums has tended to remain upon their relationship 'with primarily environmental and secondarily economic and social sustainability' (Stylianou-Lambert et al, 2014:569). This would also appear to be the case within library research, with the majority of studies focusing on 'greening' initiatives (Jankowska and Marcum, 2010:162).

Even research or initiatives focusing specifically on the maintenance of either physical or digital collections within libraries again tend to focus on the environmental, economic, and social aspects of the sustainability of these collections (Hamilton, 2004; Jankowska and Marcum, 2010; Chowdhury, 2014). Research into the sustainability of archive collections can also be seen to predominantly focus on economic and environmental concerns (Evens and Hauttekeete, 2011; Ping et al, 2014; Walters and Skinner, 2010; Wolfe, 2012). Little reference is made to cultural sustainability either as a way to guide the development of more sustainable practices or to provide explanation for why the work is necessary, despite the fact that such projects are often dealing directly with the preservation of cultural artefacts.

A similar story is told within cultural policy, such as the Museums Association's (2016) *Principles for sustainable museums.* It is possible that certain principles included in the list, such as the need to 'Acknowledge the legacy contributed by previous generations and pass on a better legacy of collections, information and knowledge to the next generation' (Museums Association, 2016), can be considered to reflect cultural sustainability concerns. However, the methods of measuring sustainability in their 'Sustainability Checklist' remain rooted in attributing objectives and targets to 'the three main aspects of sustainable development', which are considered to be 'social, economic, and environmental' concerns (Museums Association, 2016).

It is of course arguable that cultural sustainability concerns are innate within the practices of MLAs and as a result do not need further coverage in sustainability policy. Indeed, as the *Museums Change Lives* (2013) report suggests, initiatives working towards 'improving lives, creating better places and helping to advance society' are built on 'the traditional role of preserving collections and connecting audiences with them' (p.3). However, such an approach continues to value the role that organisations play in sustaining culture according to wider 'social outcomes and impact' (p.3), rather than according to its own merit.

Sustaining culture may be central to the work of MLAs, yet cultural sustainability is rarely considered as a definitive outcome within sustainability research and policy within the sector. The role that MLAs play within sustainable development continues to be valued according to its social, economic, and environmental impact, perpetuating the notion that culture

can only be valued according to its ancillary benefits. This denies organisations the opportunity to be valued according to their unique contributions to sustainable development that explicit recognition of cultural sustainability as an equal pillar would allow.

Encouraging steps have however been made within recent museum research. Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014) provide a theoretical model by which the sustainable development of museums can be assessed according to all four areas of sustainability, with a particular focus on identifying gaps in the 'parameters of cultural sustainability' (p.566). These parameters are 'constructed on the basis of the broad discussions of culture as a fourth pillar of sustainable development' as well as 'the recommendations of museum associations and the most recent debates about multiculturalism, inclusion, and community participation' (p.569-570). The aim of this model is to provide a list of the key responsibilities of museums within the cultural dimension of sustainability, to compliment the concerns already identified in the environmental, social, and economic dimensions. These responsibilities are broken down into seven separate areas (Figure 2.2).

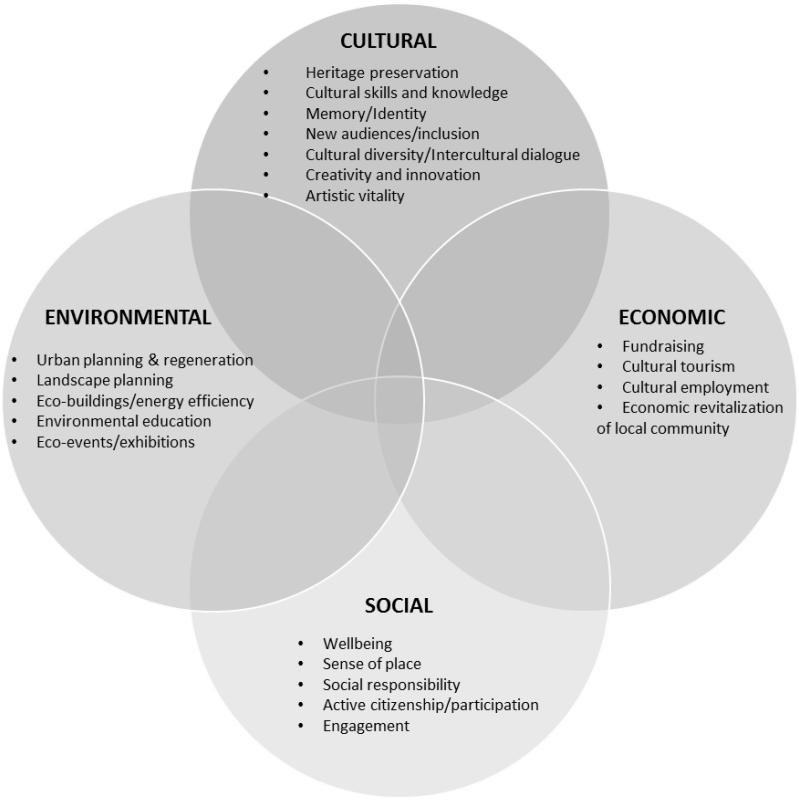

Figure 2.2. The model for sustainable museums as proposed by Stylianou-Lambert et al.

Source: Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014)

Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014) conducted their research across the museums sector in Cyprus. The model was developed with the intention of aiding cultural policy makers in identifying 'weaknesses or gaps' in particular areas of cultural sustainability within different museum environments (Stylianou-Lambert et al, 2014:572). For example, the research found state museums to 'place their emphasis on heritage preservation, the passing on of specialized cultural skills and knowledge, as well as the construction of public memory and a sense of national identity' (p.582). However, they were considered less active in 'the development of new audiences, the representation of cultural diversity, as well as creativity, innovation, and artistic vitality', which would suggest that policy would need to be amended in order to encourage development within these areas (p.582).

This study marks a significant move away from the use of the triple bottom line approach, to include cultural sustainability as an equal concern within sustainable development models for museums. Further replications of this study are however required in other countries as well as in other cultural heritage organisations such as libraries and archives. Furthermore, the focus of the model devised by Stylianou-Lambert et al is upon developing 'broader (external) cultural policies' (Stylianou-Lambert et al, 2014:569) rather than on internal practices in museums and how these may need to be adapted in order for organisations to demonstrate and improve their contributions to wider cultural sustainability agendas.

Without detailed consideration of cultural sustainability at practice level and the development of 'milestones, benchmarks or measurement facilities' to 'assist institutions in assessing their progress towards sustainability', many organisations find 'the practical application of holistic sustainability principles to their operations challenging' (Adams, 2010:26-29). In consequence, while such policies may aim to help institutions demonstrate their value to wider society, the translation of policy into practice remains problematic and as has previously been the case with sustainability initiatives based on the triple bottom line, may lead to organisations failing to include it as 'a core part of their work and planning' (Museums Association, 2009:5).

Adams (2010) attempts to address this issue by drawing on existing publications and governmental guidelines within the sustainable development field to develop a set of indicators for use within museums that incorporates all four dimensions of sustainability. The benefit of this model is that it provides museums with clear actions by which to work towards

sustainability. For example, in terms of environmental sustainability, it is suggested that organisations demonstrate their commitment to adopting more environmentally friendly practices by reducing their 'Total energy from non-renewable sources used over 12 months', their 'Total water used over 12 months' and increasing 'their 'Ratio of waste recycled to waste sent to landfill in 12 months' (p.46). Meanwhile, in terms of social sustainability, it is suggested that organisations demonstrate their efforts to 'engage the community' by reviewing the 'Total number of people to access the collections on-site in 12 months', 'The Total number of visits to the collection on-line in 12 months', and the 'Total number of volunteers registered at the institution in the last 12 months' (p.46).

In comparison to the policy focused model of Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014) the development of such specific goals and indicators provided by Adams (2010) can help towards making sustainability more relevant and manageable to practitioners at an organisational level. However, while Adams' (2010) model includes cultural sustainability as an equal concern alongside environmental, economic, and social concerns, when compared to the discourse surrounding cultural sustainability its interpretation of the potential role that museums could have within it seems to be particularly limited. For example, the main cultural sustainability goal for museums is defined as being 'to hold the collections in perpetuity and maintain its quality'. The suggested core indicators for doing so focus on conservation measures, such as the 'Proportion of the collection surveyed for conservation in the last 12 months', or the increasing or decreasing percentage of items within the collection that rate highly in terms of condition (p.46).

According to these measures, the role of museums in cultural sustainability is perceived to revolve around the preservation of physical cultural artefacts. No measures are developed to suggest how museums can improve their contributions to cultural sustainability related to the wider 'parameters of cultural sustainability' identified by Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014:566) and represented by the other six responsibilities alongside heritage preservation in Figure 2.2.

2.5 Making the distinction between internal and external sustainability in MLAs

As outlined in section 2.2, the focus of sustainability research in MLAs tends to be upon demonstrating the contributions of organisations to wider sustainable development goals. As organisations that often compete for public funding, the ability to demonstrate such contributions to wider society is of course an essential component for achieving the long-term sustainability of MLAs themselves. The addition of the cultural sphere to wider sustainable development goals provides a particularly useful path by which to demonstrate these contributions, and further research into how the contributions of MLAs to cultural sustainability can be better expressed will ultimately contribute to the sustainability of the organisations and their heritage. This would include research in independent libraries, which as discussed in section 2.1, has hitherto tended to focus on the historic role of these libraries in their communities rather than considering their current significance in contemporary society.

However, while it is true that working towards wider sustainable development goals is likely to have a positive effect on the sustainability of MLAs themselves, it does not account for the fact that as organisations, MLAs are complex systems within themselves with what can be described as their own internal sustainability concerns. Indeed, it is possible to view individual organisations as systems within the wider society, with their own economic, social, environmental, and cultural sustainability concerns (Figure 2.3).

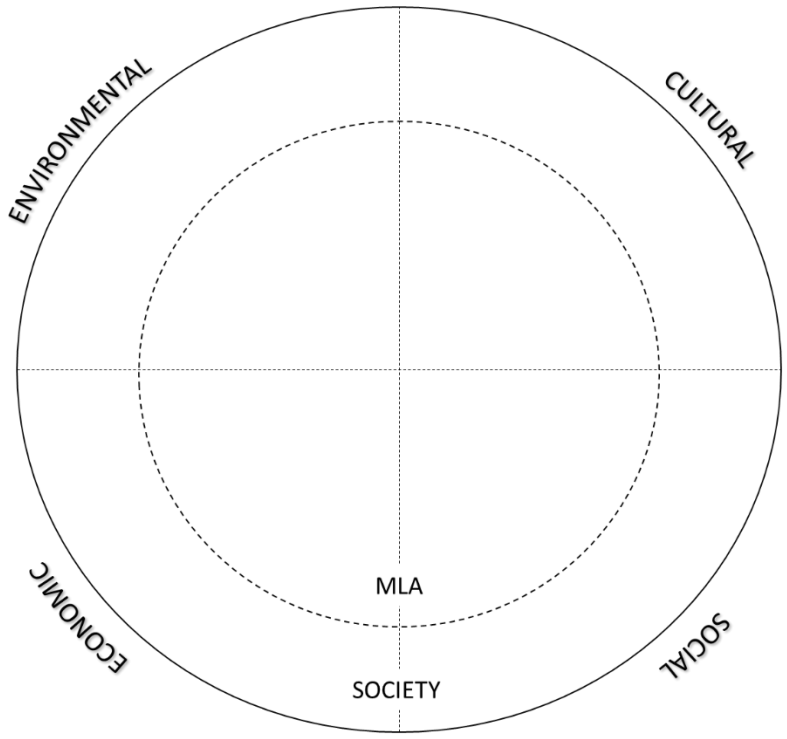

Figure 2.3. A conceptual model depicting the divide between sustainability concerns in MLAs at an organisational level and the contributions of MLAs to the wider sustainable development goals of society. Source: the author

Just as it is possible to consider the sustainability of wider society through models that consider its economic, environmental, social, and

cultural elements, so it can also be helpful to utilise the same model to holistically consider the sustainability of individual organisations. For example, in terms of social concerns, it could be helpful to investigate the role of governing bodies, staff, the community, and other external bodies that play a supportive role through associations, partnerships, and collaborations in sustaining a particular museum, library, or archive. Economic considerations would include an investigation of funding and income streams, ways of reducing costs, and the development of business strategies to make the particular organisation under investigation more economically sustainable. Environmental concerns would focus on the physical conditions required for the conservation of collections, archives, and buildings and for providing the environment necessary for the physical survival and access of cultural heritage assets within organisations. Lastly, according to the definition of culture employed in broader cultural sustainability discourse and outlined in section 2.3, cultural concerns would focus on the 'patterns of thought and behaviour, values, and beliefs' (Barthel-Bouchier, 2013:11) within the organisation that may affect its sustainability.

The popular representation of sustainability using a Venn diagram as employed by Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014; Figure 2.2) does not allow for this distinction to be made between internal and external sustainability. While useful at a policy level in terms of relating museum activity to external sustainable development goals, the model by Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014) does not account for the fact that the museum as an organisation is in fact a system within a system, with its own sustainability concerns. As a result, the concerns identified in each of the four dimensions, such as 'urban planning

and regeneration', 'cultural diversity/intercultural dialogue', 'economic revitalization of local community', and 'active citizenship/participation' (Stylianou-Lambert et al, 2014:570) can be seen to be firmly rooted in concerns related to the sustainable development of wider society, rather than the sustainability of the museums themselves (Figure 2.4).

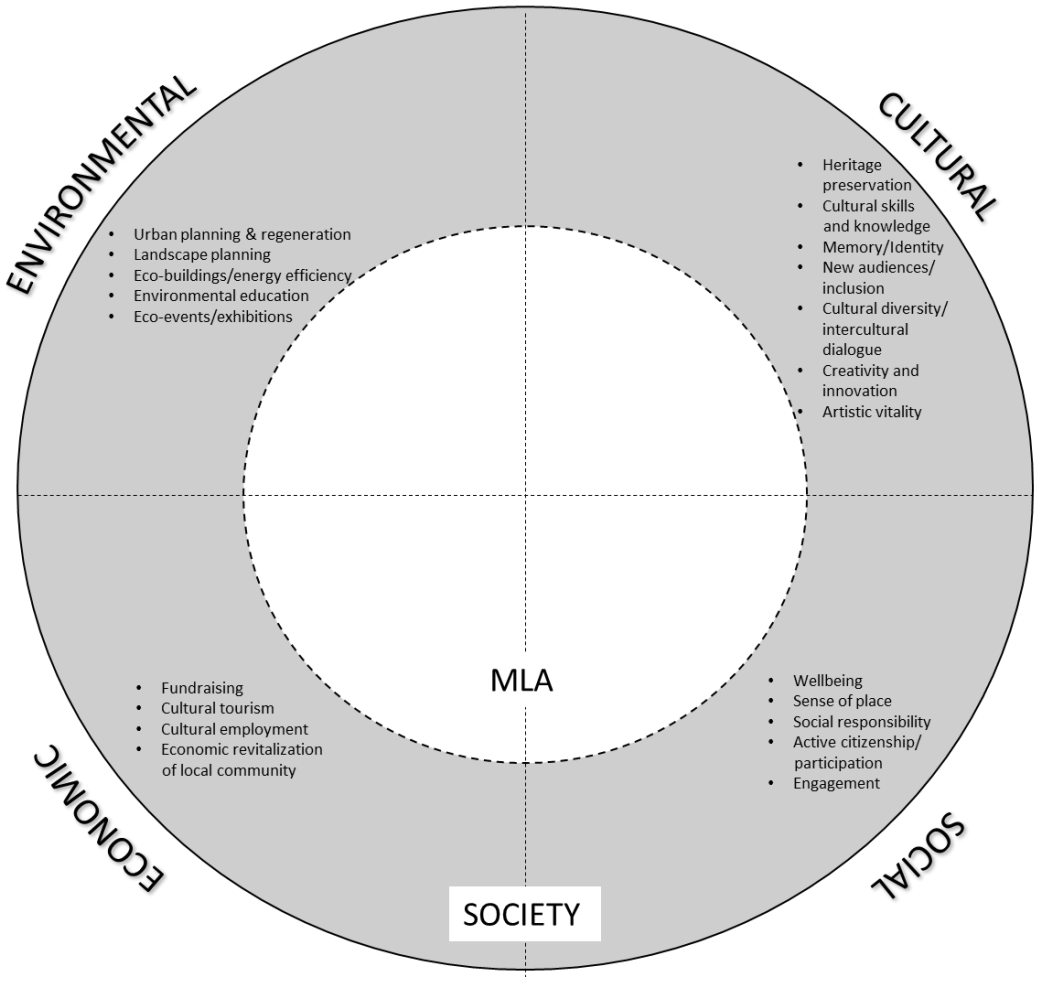

Figure 2.4. The focus of the sustainable museums model by Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014) on the contributions of organisations to external sustainable development goals. Source: the author

This distinction between external and internal sustainability is also not made by Adams (2010) and despite the fact that the study is concerned with improving sustainability at a practical level, the majority of the indicators proposed can be seen to be focused on demonstrating the contributions of museums to external sustainable development agendas. For example, the environmental indicators are focused entirely on the contributions of organisations to the sustainability of the natural environment through reducing energy consumption and waste. No consideration is given to sustaining the internal organisational environment and ensuring the optimum conditions for the physical survival and access of the museum's cultural heritage assets.

Although the pilot social indicators originally considered do include a number related to the 'Calibre and diversity of current and potential staff' (Adams, 2010:54) which would appear to be directly related to the sustainability of the organisation itself, in the refined model these indicators are omitted. The social indicators proposed by the study focus on 'engaging the community' in order to contribute to wellbeing and inclusion in wider society (Adams, 2010:46). No consideration is given of the social structures within the museum itself and how they may affect its sustainability at an organisational level.

Meanwhile, the focus of the cultural indicators is on improving preservation and conservation practices so that the museum's collections can be held 'in perpetuity' for the benefit of its community (Adams, 2010:46). No consideration is given of the culture that exists within the museum environment, and as a result the 'patterns of thought and behaviour, values,

and beliefs' (Barthel-Bouchier, 2013:11) that may affect its sustainability remain unquestioned.

It is in fact only the economic indicators that fully focus on the internal sustainability of the museum itself. Although the pilot economic indicators originally suggested include a number related to 'Supporting the local economy' (Adams, 2010:65), these concerns are excluded from the refined model, with the focus remaining on the economic sustainability of the organisation itself and its ability to have 'a balanced and diverse budget' (Adams, 2010:46).

Adams' (2010) indicators can therefore be seen to be working towards a combination of goals related to demonstrating the organisation's contributions to external sustainable development agendas and improving the internal sustainability of the organisation. As depicted in Figure 2.5, this means that the four sustainability dimensions are not fully explored or developed at each level, with no consideration being given to the dimensions related to the organisation's internal environmental, social, and economic sustainability and no consideration being given to demonstrating the museum's contributions to external economic sustainability.

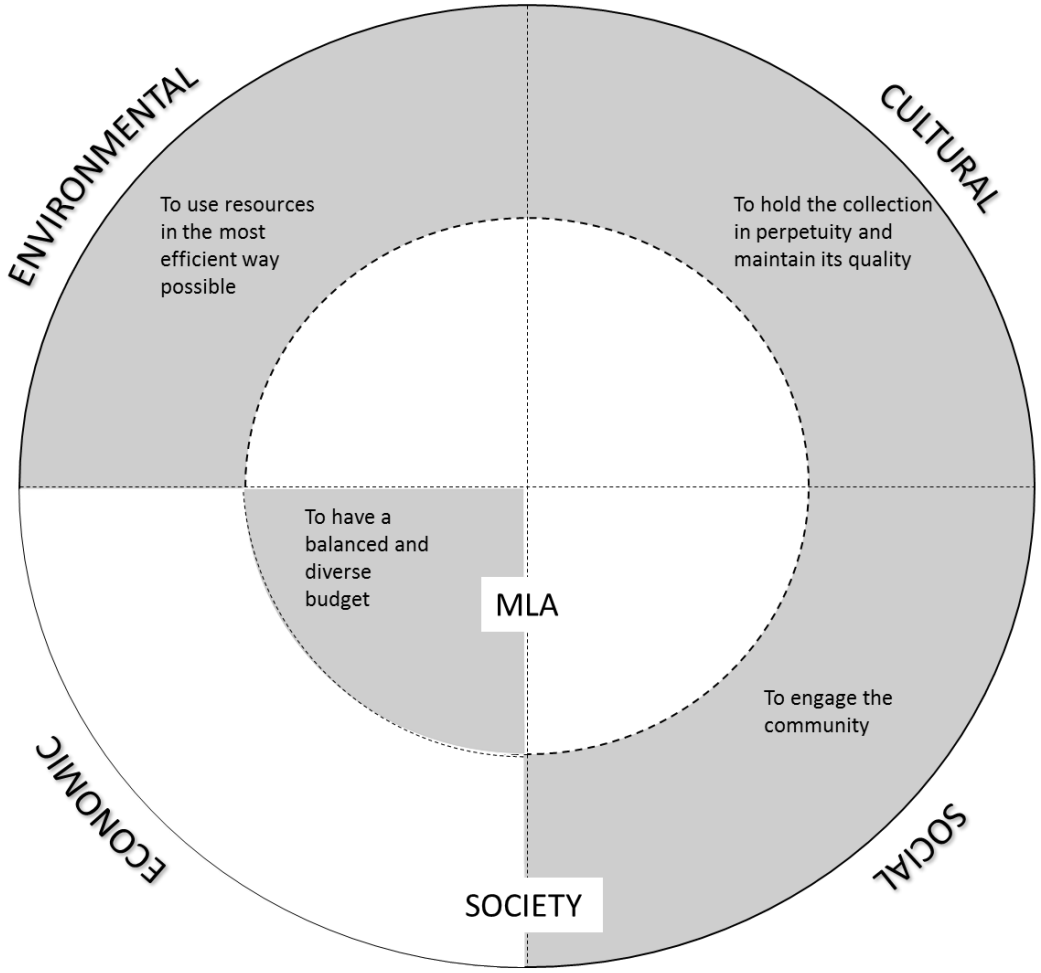

Figure 2.5. The focus of Adams' (2010) sustainability goals for museums. Source: the author

A more recent study by Pop and Borza (2016a) can be seen to make the distinction between internal organisational sustainability and external sustainable development goals. Asserting that it is essential that museums can ensure 'their own survival and development' first before they can 'contribute to the sustainable development of their respective communities' (p.5), Pop and Borza (2016a) contend that it is essential that sustainability

indicators for museums include a consideration of the factors that affect their own organisational sustainability.

After conducting a review of the literature on 'the sustainable management of museums' and 'synthesiz[ing] the most relevant conclusions drawn' (Pop and Borza, 2016a:3), the study proceeds to conduct interviews with experts from the Romanian museums sector in order to consider how factors such as 'the type, size and management and marketing strategies applied by a certain museum can influence its sustainability' (p.6). The data collected provides the basis for the development of a set of 33 indicators and a model that can be used for 'objective…measurement of museum sustainability' (p.6).

The indicators developed provide organisations with a way to numerically calculate their sustainability. As well as providing museums with indicators to demonstrate their contributions to external sustainable development agendas, they also include indicators that can be used to measure the internal sustainability of the museum as an organisation. For example, indicators for economic sustainability seek to measure both the 'economic impact on the community' of the museum as well as its own 'economic efficiency' as an organisation. Meanwhile, indicators for social sustainability seek to consider both the wider 'social impact' of the museum through measuring 'collection accessibility' and 'community involvement' '(Pop and Borza, 2016:a:16), as well as the impact of its staffing arrangements within the organisation (Pop and Borza, 2016a:16).

However, as with Adams' (2010) model, the indicators provided by Pop and Borza (2016a) related to environmental sustainability are solely concerned with the organisation's contribution to the external 'Natural environment' through using resources such as electricity and water 'as efficiently as possible' (p.6). Once again, they do not provide any consideration of sustainability issues related to the internal environment of the museum.

While the cultural sustainability indicators developed do cover a concern for increasing collection 'research' alongside improving collection 'storage' and 'conservation', these indicators can again be seen to revolve around ensuring the museum contributes to external cultural sustainability goals by maintaining and using their collections for the cultural benefit of the community. Again, no consideration is given of how the culture within the museum itself affects the sustainability of the organisation. In addition, the potential contributions of the organisation to external cultural sustainability are again not considered beyond preserving and providing access to the physical cultural artefacts that it holds.

Although the indicators and model proposed by Pop and Borza (2016a) can be seen to substantially develop understanding of the relationship between internal organisational sustainability and external sustainable development goals, as depicted in Figure 2.6, it still does not account for the museums internal environmental and cultural sustainability.

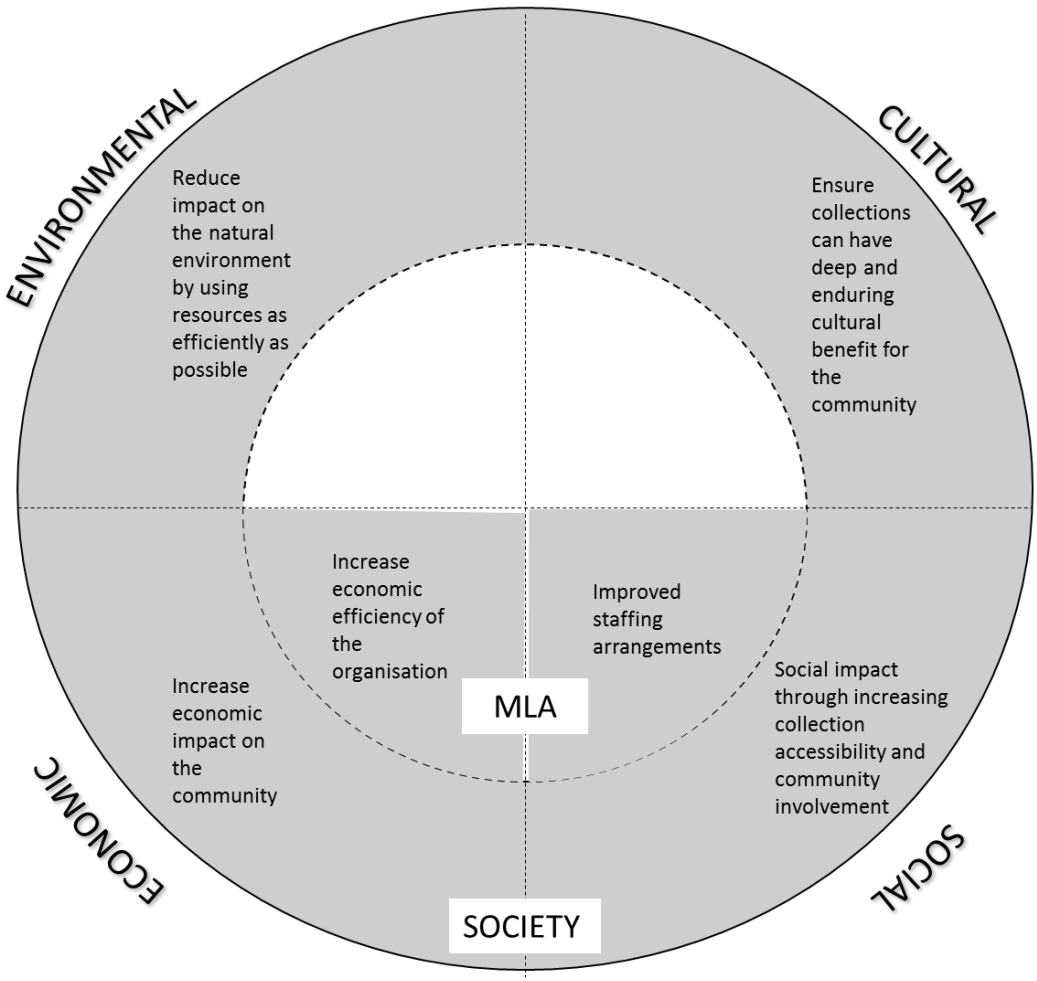

Figure 2.6. The focus of Pop and Borza's (2016a) sustainability indicators for museums. Source: the author

In bringing together sustainability concerns identified in the previous literature, studies to develop a holistic set of sustainability indicators such as those by Adams (2010) and Pop and Borza (2016a) can be seen to incorporate a blend of both internal and external sustainability concerns according to the focus of the previous literature upon which these indicators were based.

Regarding the development of the cultural dimension, because the focus of museum sustainability literature is most often on describing how their 'various activities' can 'contribute to…sustainable development' (Pop and Borza, 2016a:2), and because the main contribution of museums to cultural sustainability has generally been conceived in terms of their 'function' as institutions that 'conserve and valorize the cultural resources of a community' (p.5), this has so far formed the basis for incorporating the cultural dimension into museum sustainability models. As such, sustainability issues related to the internal culture of the museum environment remain overlooked within these models.

2.6 Sustaining heritage in MLAs for cultural sustainability

One further limitation regarding the conceptualisation of cultural sustainability within MLA research is that, as is demonstrated by the focus on physical preservation and conservation measures in the indicators developed by both Adams' (2010) and Pop and Borza (2016a), the notion of the heritage that organisations preserve for their communities tends to be limited by a narrow definition of heritage consisting solely of physical cultural artefacts. This does not correlate with the definition of cultural heritage found in the broader discourse on cultural sustainability outlined in section 2.3, which considers intangible heritage to also form an important aspect of the cultural heritage assets that need to be protected for cultural sustainability to be possible.

As a result, no consideration is given towards the role that MLAs play in sustaining intangible heritage through, for example, the oral history projects that organisations may produce and which clearly enable the

transmission of ‘knowledge and traditions’ (Soini and Birkeland, 2014:216). Without explicit recognition of this role in MLA sustainability models, indicators cannot be developed to improve the sustainability of this different form of cultural heritage asset, and organisations can also not gain recognition of their role in sustaining intangible heritage when seeking to demonstrate their contributions to external sustainable development agendas.

Furthermore, following on from Throsby’s (1997) definition of cultural heritage as a ‘stock’ of ‘capital’ that needs to be carefully managed for cultural sustainability to be possible, cultural sustainability indicators based purely on physical preservation and conservation practices would seem insufficient, particularly when considered in comparison to the extensive strategies that have been developed to ensure the sustainable management of the stock of ecological resources for environmental sustainability (Throsby, 2008).

It is arguable that studies focusing specifically on the sustainability of collections can provide the basis for developing more comprehensive indicators related to the sustainable management of cultural heritage. Indeed, studies that consider the environmental, economic, and social sustainability of either physical or digital collections within MLAs (Chowdhury, 2014; Evens and Hauttekeete, 2011; Hamilton, 2004; Jankowska and Marcum, 2010; Ping et al, 2010; Walters and Skinner, 2010; Wolfe, 2012), or which consider the development of policy, technology and other supporting structures necessary for their long term sustainability (Chowdhury, 2014; Laws, 2014; Merriman, 2006; Plale, 2013; Tait et al, 2013) provide a wealth

of insights into the broader issues related to the sustainability of collections beyond physical preservation and conservation practices.

However, as was originally asserted in section 2.4, such studies are not framed by the concept of cultural sustainability. As a result, the strategies developed do not explicitly consider the intrinsic role that 'patterns of thought and behaviour, values, and beliefs' (Barthel-Bouchier, 2013:11) have on facilitating the sustainability of these collections. They also do not provide any consideration of the relationship between the work of MLAs in sustaining these collections and external cultural sustainability goals, despite the fact that being able to demonstrate the value of sustaining collections according to such externally set agendas is another key element of their sustainability.

Furthermore, being focused on the sustainable management of the collections themselves, they do not consider how the wider organisational environment that surrounds them affects their sustainability, despite the fact that issues related to the sustainability of MLAs at an organisational level such as those set out in section 2.5 would clearly have a direct impact on the sustainability of the collections.

A study that does appear to consider the relationship between the sustainability of collections and the wider organisational environment is Newman's (2010) investigation into the sustainability of community archives. Developing a 'methodological framework for assessing the likely sustainability of Community Archives…based on requirements for managing community (or local history) archives documented by United States archivists', the study identifies a number of 'organisational factors [that] have

a significant impact on the maintenance of the archival records and the evidential value they contain' (p.3). These factors include concerns related to governance, funding, staff skills, collaboration, and the dynamism of the organisation, as well as its preservation and archival practices and its levels of community engagement (p.62).

Alongside each of these factors, the framework identifies a series of characteristics that are believed to correspond to the likely sustainability of the archives. These can be seen to touch on a number of environmental, economic, social, and cultural sustainability concerns related to the sustainability of the archives. For example, environmental concerns include whether or not the archives are kept in 'Appropriate storage facilities', social concerns include whether or not the archives have 'sufficient numbers' of staff, economic concerns include whether or not the archives have 'dependable' funding streams, and cultural concerns include whether or not the archives stakeholders have positive attitudes towards 'change' and 'growth' (Newman, 2010:62).

Newman's (2010) framework can be used provide a comprehensive assessment of the sustainability of archives at an organisational level. This framework could also be adapted in order to provide a method by which to interrogate the sustainability of the collections held by other organisations, such as museums and libraries. However, while the study does provide a fairly holistic perspective on the environment necessary for the sustainability of collections at an organisational level, it is not framed by wider sustainable development discourse. As a result, it cannot be used to consider the relationship between internal organisational sustainability and external

sustainable development, or the relationship between the work of MLAs in sustaining collections and external cultural sustainability goals.

Without providing recognition of this relationship, Newman's (2010) framework cannot be used to identify any conflicts that may exist between sustaining the collections themselves and wider sustainability goals. This could for example include the conflict that may arise between the conservation needs of collections and the responsibilities of the organisation to the natural environment, which owing to conservation practices not always being eco-friendly, can often be opposed to each other.

This section has identified two assumptions about heritage from the broader discourse surrounding cultural sustainability that have hitherto remained underexplored in MLA sustainability models. These are:

1. The heritage that needs to be sustained for cultural sustainability to be possible includes both tangible and intangible cultural heritage assets
2. These assets can be considered to form a stock of cultural capital which needs to be itself sustainably managed if it is to be utilised for the purposes of achieving cultural sustainability

In addition to the need for MLA sustainability models to distinguish between external sustainability goals and internal organisational sustainability as outlined in the previous section, according to these assumptions it would also seem prudent for such models to provide greater opportunity to examine the actions necessary within organisations to ensure the sustainability of their heritage, in whichever form it may take. These

actions are after all essential to enabling their successful contribution to external cultural sustainability goals.

Moreover, it can be conceived that the purpose of MLAs existing in the first place is to ensure the sustainability of their heritage collections. These collections are what provide MLAs with their unique value, not only at a business level but also in terms of their contributions to wider sustainable development goals. It is therefore crucial for the sustainability of MLAs as organisations that the sustainability of their heritage collections is considered a priority.

Rather than seeing heritage preservation as simply an aspect of the contributions of MLAs to external cultural sustainability goals, it may in fact be beneficial to adapt sustainability models by placing a concern for the sustainability of their heritage collections at its centre. The MLA environment, with its own internal organisational sustainability concerns could then be viewed as the mediator between the heritage that it exists to sustain and the wider sustainable development goals of society (Figure 2.7).

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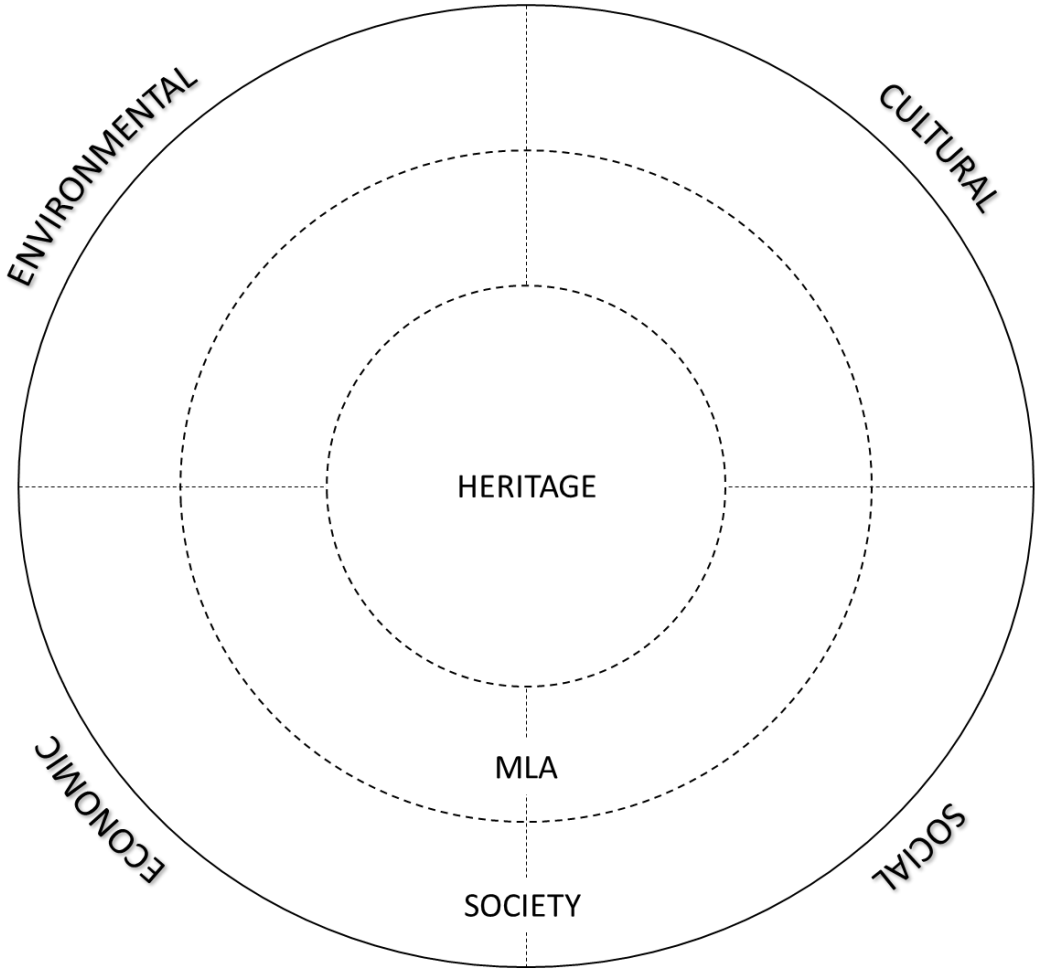

Figure 2.7 Conceptual model for the levels of sustainability in MLAs. Source: the author

2.7 Intentions for taking the research forward

The table in Appendix 1 provides a record of previous conceptual work and empirical research in relation to sustainability in museums, libraries, and archives. No reference to cultural sustainability can be found within the conceptual work related to sustainability in museums, libraries, or archives. Only the three empirical studies highlighted in grey by Stylinaou-Lambert et al (2014), Adams (2010), and Pop and Borza (2016a) make specific reference to the concept of cultural sustainability. All three of these studies

were undertaken in the museums sector, meaning none of the empirical research conducted in either libraries or archives includes a consideration of cultural sustainability.

It is clear that despite the potential benefits outlined over the course of this chapter that little has been done to integrate cultural sustainability into sustainability strategies for MLAs and the focus in conceptual work, policy, and empirical research in all three sectors tends to remain on environmental, economic, and social sustainability. The models and indicators proposed by Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014), Adams (2010), and Pop and Borza (2016a) can be seen to mark a significant step forward at least within the museums sector. However, because of the convention of focusing on demonstrating contributions to external sustainable development goals, the relationship between MLAs and cultural sustainability has not yet been considered beyond this external focus. In addition, efforts to integrate cultural sustainability into MLA sustainability strategies would appear to have been further impeded by the fact that cultural sustainability is an elusive concept that itself has yet to be fully understood.

Consideration of the broader discourse on cultural sustainability together with a critical analysis of the conceptualisation of sustainability in MLAs provided the basis for the development of the Conceptual Model for the Levels of Sustainability in MLAs. This model not only embeds cultural sustainability as an equal dimension to environmental, economic, and social sustainability, but through its configuration also incorporates assumptions derived from the broader discourse surrounding cultural sustainability. Specifically, this includes the need to consider the role of culture in enabling

sustainable practices to be adopted at an organisational level, and the need to consider sustainability according to the mediating role that MLAs play between sustaining the heritage, which forms their stock of cultural capital, and external sustainable development agendas.

It is on the basis of these assumptions that the study will seek to collect and interpret data to elaborate on the relationship between MLAs and cultural sustainability depicted by the model. Because of the specific focus of this study on cultural sustainability and because the areas of environmental, economic, and social sustainability have already received significant coverage within the previous literature, the collection of empirical data will focus on the dimensions highlighted in Figure 2.8.

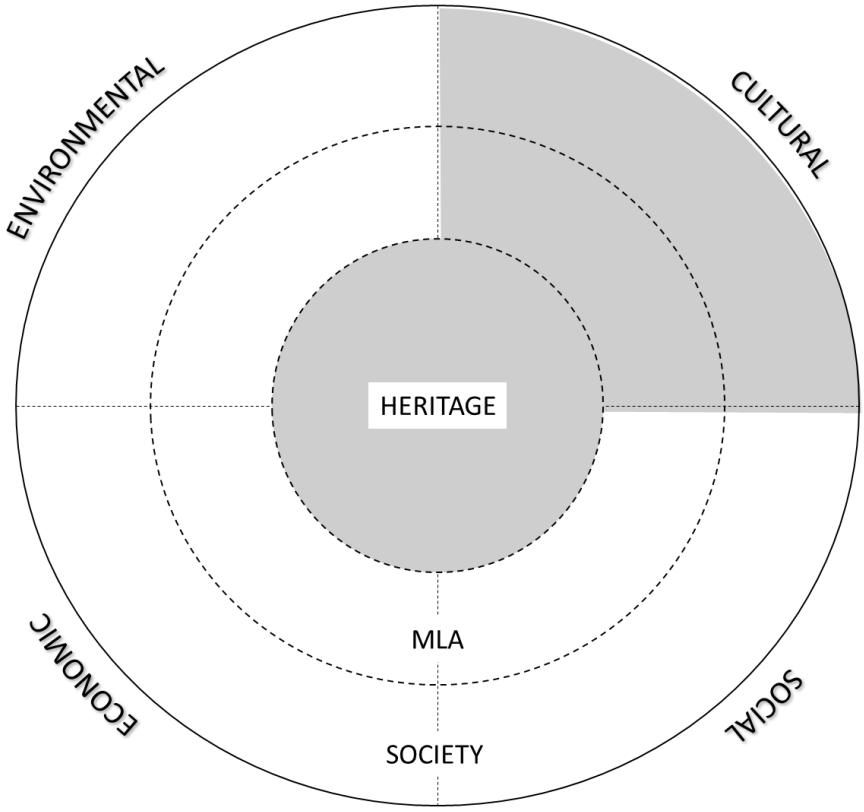

Figure 2.8 The dimensions of the model upon which the collection of empirical data will focus. Source: the author

According to the arguments outlined in this chapter, in order to be able to fully understand the relationship between a museum, library, or archive and cultural sustainability, it is necessary:

1. To build an in-depth picture of the cultural heritage assets maintained by the museum, library, or archive (the inner circle of Figure 2.8)
2. To consider the organisation's potential contributions to external cultural sustainability goals (the outer circle of Figure 2.8)
3. To establish an understanding of the sustainability issues faced by the museum, library, or archive at an organisational level (the middle circle of Figure 2.8)

The first two steps are essential for enabling the role of the museum, library, or archive in sustaining cultural heritage for cultural sustainability to be elaborated on beyond physical preservation and conservation practices. The third step is essential for being able to understand how the organisation's internal sustainability affects its ability to carry out its mediating role between the heritage that it sustains and external cultural sustainability goals. In accordance with the notion that culture itself plays a role in enabling sustainability, this third step should also include a consideration of how the organisation's internal culture affects its ability to fulfil this role.

Objectives two, three, and four of the study have been specifically formulated to enable data related to each of these three steps to be collected

within the research context of independent libraries. To recap, these objectives are:

2. To profile independent libraries and their cultural heritage assets in order to provide the baseline for the study and develop understanding of their perceived cultural value (inner circle of Figure 2.8)
3. To establish understanding of the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability (outer circle of Figure 2.8)
4. To consider the challenges to achieving sustainability in independent libraries at an organisational level and offer examples of best practice for overcoming these challenges (middle circle of Figure 2.8)

The fulfilment of these objectives will build a comprehensive account of the relationship between independent libraries and cultural sustainability which will be used to help elaborate on the conceptual model. In addition to contributing to the development of theory regarding MLAs and cultural sustainability in this way, the data collected will also provide practical insights into how cultural sustainability can be achieved in independent libraries and other MLAs to which these insights can be transferred, thus helping to fulfil the overall aim of the research ‘To contribute to theory and practice in relation to cultural sustainability in museums, libraries, and archives’.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHODS

3.0 Introduction

Having established the intentions for moving the research forward through the collection of empirical data at the end of the previous chapter, this chapter will proceed to discuss the underlying methodology and research methods that will be employed in the collection of this data. A useful method by which to approach the design of an empirical research study is Saunders et al's (2015:124) 'research onion' diagram, which depicts the process as involving a series of layers of issues that must be considered before arriving at the chosen data collection and analysis methods.

This chapter will follow the order of Saunders et al's (2015) diagram as it presents each of these issues. Beginning with a consideration of the research philosophy and research approach that informed the study, it will then progress to provide a detailed analysis of the research strategy. This will be followed by a discussion of the chosen sampling methods and an examination of the data collection and analysis methods that were employed by the study. The issue of research quality will finally be discussed at the end of the chapter.

3.1 Purpose of the study

It is essential when designing a research study to first develop a clear understanding of the purpose of the study (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). The overarching purpose of any research study is of course to either develop or

test theory. To do so research must ‘fulfil either an exploratory, descriptive, explanatory or evaluative purpose, or some combination of these’ (Saunders et al, 2015:174). Exploratory studies provide a means by which to ‘ask open questions to discover what is happening and gain insights about a topic of interest’ (p.174). Descriptive studies meanwhile aim to ‘gain an accurate profile of events, persons or situations’ (p.175), explanatory studies aim to ‘establish causal relationships between variables’, and evaluative studies aim to ‘find out how well something works’ (p.176).

The main aim of this study is ‘To contribute to theory and practice in relation to cultural sustainability in museums, libraries, and archives’. To do so, the study began by developing a conceptual model in response to an analysis of the relevant literature on cultural sustainability and sustainability in MLAs which seeks to explain the relationship between MLAs and cultural sustainability on a theoretical level. The empirical data collected in the context of independent libraries will then be used to further elaborate on this relationship by providing an in-depth exploration of the different levels of the conceptual model and the relationships between them. According to Saunders et al’s (2015:176) definitions, the focus on developing a ‘clearer view’ of these ‘relationships’ would therefore indicate an overall explanatory purpose to the study.

3.2 Research philosophy

Research philosophy **‘**Refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge’ (Saunders, 2015:124). Any research study that aims to develop knowledge in a particular field will inevitably be shaped

by such assumptions. Depending upon the philosophical stance taken, different assumptions can be made relating to the nature of reality (ontological assumptions), what constitutes acceptable knowledge (epistemological assumptions), and the role that the individual values of researchers and participants play in the research process (axiological assumptions). These assumptions in turn affect how the research problem is considered, the methods that are chosen, and how the research findings are interpreted (Flick, 2011). Having a consistent philosophical approach is therefore of crucial importance to designing a coherent research project.

Two widely used research philosophies are positivism and interpretivism. Positivism takes the stance that reality is singular and exists independently of human experience (Lee and Lings, 2008). Knowledge must be gained by observing and measuring the facts presented by this reality, and the researcher must maintain an objective stance in order for the findings to be considered valid. In general, positivistic research tends to take a deductive approach to research that often involves testing hypothesis and establishing causal relationships between the different variables being studied, with quantitative methods of analysis often being employed (Saunders, 2015; Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2014).

In comparison, interpretivism takes the stance that there are various versions of reality which are open to the interpretations and perceptions of each individual (Lee and Lings, 2008). Knowledge cannot therefore be reduced to simple theories and concepts, and must instead be gained by considering multiple narratives, perceptions and interpretations. As researchers bring their own perceptions and interpretations to the situation

being studied, an interpretivist philosophy recognises the difficulty of maintaining an objective stance and suggests that the researcher's own interpretations must be recognised as a key contribution to the research findings. Typically taking an inductive approach, interpretivist research aims to generate new theories and provide in-depth understanding of particular phenomena, often employing qualitative methods of analysis to do so (Saunders, 2015; Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2014).

As Sekaran and Bougie (2013) suggest, no one research philosophy is considered superior to another as each has its own merits and limitations. Deciding on the most appropriate philosophy for a research study is therefore a 'reflexive process' (Saunders et al, 2015:126), which requires careful consideration of the ontological, axiological, and epistemological assumptions associated with each philosophy in relation to the beliefs of the researcher and the overall design of the research study.

Consideration of these factors suggested to the researcher that for this particular study, interpretivism would be the most appropriate philosophy to adopt. The reasoning behind this choice is outlined below:

Ontological assumptions

The development of the conceptual model is based on the assumption that, as explored in chapter two, both culture and sustainability are socially constructed concepts whose exact meanings can change according to the context in which they are being applied. This is in line with interpretivist beliefs that reality is 'socially constructed through culture and language' and that there can be 'multiple meanings, interpretations and versions of reality'

rather than there being ‘one true reality’ as would be central to positivist beliefs (Saunders et al 2016:136).

Axiological assumptions

Since the initial development of the conceptual model was based upon the researcher’s critical analysis of the literature on cultural sustainability and sustainability in MLAs, the researcher’s interpretations are key to the contributions of the research. Again, this is in line with interpretivist beliefs about the role of values in research and would be inconsistent with the positivist belief that researcher’s must maintain an objective stance for research to be considered valid.

Epistemological assumptions

The literature review also highlighted that the uptake of previous sustainability models had suffered owing to a lack of perceived relevance to MLA professionals. The development of research methods that allow for the integration of the perceptions and interpretations of professionals working in the sector would therefore seem essential to developing insights into the relationship between MLAs and cultural sustainability that will have more practical relevance. This follows typically interpretivist beliefs that organisational research should strive to understand the perceptions and interpretations of practitioners to develop new understandings, rather than the positivist belief that research should focus on ‘observable and measurable facts’ in order to generate ‘law-like generalisations’ and enable ‘causal explanation and prediction’ (Saunders et al, 2016:136).

In addition, owing to the lack of previous research regarding the role of MLAs in cultural sustainability and with regard to current organisational practices in independent libraries, it would seem necessary that an interpretivist approach is first taken to help generate a body of knowledge related to both of these areas that could then provide the basis for forming hypotheses and investigating causal relationships between specific variables according to a positivist paradigm. Along with the interpretivist assumptions underlying the study, this would again indicate that an approach guided by interpretivist beliefs would be the most suitable for achieving the research aims.

3.3 Approach to theory development

As outlined in section 3.2, each research philosophy tends to be associated with certain research approaches and strategies. Positivism is often associated with a deductive approach and quantitative strategy, while interpretivism is usually associated with an inductive approach and qualitative strategy. While the adoption of an interpretivist philosophy does not necessarily automatically require an inductive approach, careful consideration of the processes associated with each approach suggested that an inductive approach would indeed be the most appropriate for this study.

For example, the aim of deductive research is to collect data to test theories that are derived from the researcher's reading of pre-existing academic literature, while inductive research seeks to collect data in order to 'explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns' and thereby generate

or build new theories (Saunders et al, 2015:146). Since the conceptual model developed from the researcher's reading of the literature provides the basis for the collection of empirical data, the overall structure of the study would seem to bear more of a resemblance to deductive research that typically moves from theory development to data collection rather than inductive research that typically collects data first before moving on to building theory.

However, rather than collecting data to test the underlying theory behind the conceptual model, the study instead intends to use the model to guide the further understanding of the previously underexplored 'phenomenon' of the relationship between MLAs and cultural sustainability. The model can therefore be seen as a tool that is intended to be used to generate knowledge by which to address the lack of theoretical development regarding cultural sustainability in MLAs, rather than as a theory in its own right that has been put forward for rigorous testing.

While the study will seek to provide some observations on the validity of the model through the empirical data that is collected, due to the lack of previous research in this area at this stage the primary focus is upon collecting in-depth data to further understanding of the relationship between MLAs and cultural sustainability. Collecting qualitative data through an inductive approach would therefore seem the most appropriate, as it puts fewer restrictions on the data being collected and tends to enable the development of 'a richer theoretical perspective than already exists in the literature' (Saunders et al 2016:168).

3.4 Research Strategy

Now that the underlying philosophy and approach to the study have been addressed, the research strategy will be discussed. As Saunders et al (2015) suggest, the research strategy provides a 'plan of action' to achieve the aims of the research and is the 'methodological link' between the research philosophy and the data collection and analysis methods (p.177). In general, certain research strategies tend to be associated with particular research philosophies and approaches. For example, qualitative research that is embedded in an interpretive philosophy and an inductive approach, as is the case with this research study, tends to most commonly employ the strategies of action research, case study research, ethnography, Grounded Theory, or narrative research. As each strategy has a 'specific emphasis and scope as well as a particular set of procedures' (p.169), the strategy chosen ultimately depends upon which is likely to most successfully fulfil the research aims and objectives, as well as more practical concerns related to the extent of existing knowledge, the amount of time and resources available, and access to participants.

However, Saunders et al (2015) also stipulate that research strategies should not be considered 'mutually exclusive' (p.178) and can be combined in order to fulfil the requirements of the research. Indeed, according to the broad nature of the research objectives of this study, a combined research strategy was considered the most suitable. As outlined at the end of the previous chapter, the objectives associated with the empirical data collection are:

2. To profile independent libraries and their cultural heritage assets in order to provide the baseline for the study and develop understanding of their perceived cultural value

3. To establish understanding of the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability

4. To consider the challenges to achieving sustainability in independent libraries at an organisational level and offer examples of best practice for overcoming these challenges

The aim of objective two was to provide a baseline for the study by developing insight into the nature of the organisations and the cultural heritage assets that they work to sustain. This would therefore require a broad overview of the entire, or at least a large proportion, of the sector to be developed.

A broad overview of the sector would meanwhile not necessarily be required for fulfilling objective three. Indeed, it could have been possible to gain insight into the contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability through a case study strategy that would focus on specific libraries and then develop generalisations for the rest of the sector. However, owing to the unique characteristics of the libraries as independent organisations, it was felt that this would pose difficulties in selecting representative organisations to be involved in the research. For that reason, a research strategy that could enable a wider ranging sample again seemed the most appropriate.

A research strategy that is well suited to collecting data from a 'sizeable population' is a survey strategy (Saunders et al, 2015:181). This strategy is usually associated with a deductive, quantitative approach that often employs questionnaires or structured interviews, breaking down the answers of the surveyed population into statistics. Such methods would be inappropriate as questionnaires and structured interviews require standardised answers based on previously established theory, which is not possible in such an under-researched area. Often limited by pre-defined answers, the data collected by such methods also tends to be less wide ranging than that collected by other research strategies and would therefore be too restrictive in building the broad understanding required by the study.

However, Bryman (2012) contests this limited view of a survey strategy, arguing that it incorporates a far broader range of research methods that include 'structured observation, content analysis, official statistics, and diaries' (p.59). Moreover, it is also considered to be a very popular mode of qualitative research, with 'unstructured…or semi-structured interviewing with a number of people' often being employed (p.62). Recognising the close association of the idea of a survey with questionnaires and structured interviews, Bryman suggests the use of an alternative term, 'cross-sectional research', which puts the emphasis on the fact that it is a research strategy that 'entails the collection of data on more than one case…at a single point in time' (p.58).

By enabling the collection of data from a wide range of participants, a cross-sectional research strategy employing qualitative methods could therefore be considered an ideal strategy for developing a broad overview of

the sector and fulfilling the requirements of objectives two and three. However, objective four, which aims to 'To consider the challenges to achieving sustainability in independent libraries at an organisational level and offer examples of best practice for overcoming these challenges' could have proven more problematic to achieve through such an approach. While a broad overview of the challenges faced by the libraries could have provided adequate data to fulfil this part of the objective, the requirement to 'offer examples of best practice' would seem to require a strategy that enables a more in-depth focus on specific examples. To fulfil such an objective, a case study strategy which can be used to 'identify and describe the impact of a programme or innovation-in-action, with the report being oriented towards improving decision making and practice', would in fact often be considered the most appropriate (Somekh et al, 2012:55).

It could have been possible to have a stage of cross-sectional research to fulfil objectives two and three and the first half of objective four followed by an additional stage of case study research aimed at providing examples of best practice. However, practical considerations regarding time constraints and access to participants suggested that this could be difficult to implement. To be able to provide examples of best practice in overcoming the challenges to sustainability would first require the challenges that exist to be established. As such, it would be necessary to complete the cross-sectional research in its entirety first to determine these challenges before it would be possible to even identify case studies that could offer examples of best practice. It was therefore a concern that the overall duration that would be required for completing these two stages consecutively may likely be

longer than the timeframe available for the project. In addition, the fact that case study research would require regular access to organisations that would likely be geographically remote from each other was another important concern that similarly suggested that this approach to fulfilling the need to identify best practices would be impracticable.

A course of action to overcoming this issue is once again provided by Bryman (2012), who suggests that it is possible to carry out cross-sectional research that includes case study elements. An example of this is Leonard's (2004) study into the 'notion of social capital for research into neighbourhood formation' (Bryman, 2012:). The study's use of semi-structured interviews with 246 participants to establish understanding of the 'relevance of social capital' would seem to follow a cross-sectional research strategy that aims to 'generate statements that apply regardless of time and place'. However, the findings also include the in-depth examination of particular examples discovered during the research that can provide useful illumination of particular issues. This is more often associated with case study research, which aims to 'elucidate the unique features' of a particular case (Bryman, 2012:69).

While the overall strategy would appear to be a cross-sectional one that aims to develop a broad overview of the issue at hand, the fact that it includes particular examples in the findings to elucidate points enables the more in-depth focus of case study research to be incorporated within the design. Such a strategy would therefore seem ideal for achieving the broad overview required to fulfil objectives two and three and the first half of objective four within this research project, while simultaneously providing the

opportunity for the identification of particular examples of best practice to fulfil the second half of objective four.

3.4.1 The inclusion of cross-cultural comparisons within the research strategy

The overall research strategy employed by this study has been determined as a cross-sectional strategy that includes case study elements. However, an important issue that transpired during the initial design stages of the project was the small size of the independent library sector, and the difficulties that may therefore arise in gaining a suitable number of participants for the study. As Saunders et al (2015) suggest, such pragmatic concerns regarding access to potential participants are also important to consider when developing a research strategy. To provide access to a larger pool of potential participants, it was therefore decided to expand the scope of the project to include independent libraries in the USA as well as in the UK.

The practical reasons behind this choice will be more fully explored in section 3.5.1. However, there were a number of other motivations for the inclusion of cross-cultural comparisons within the overall research strategy. For example, as explored in the literature review, it is imperative that the issue of sustainability is considered holistically and includes factors both external and internal to the organisation. The development of a cross-cultural comparison and an analysis of the similarities and differences between the libraries in each country could provide particularly useful insights into political, economic, and cultural factors affecting cultural sustainability in MLAs that would otherwise not be possible. Given the focus of this study,

any insights that could be generated regarding the effect of external cultural factors would be particularly relevant. In addition, with the American and British independent library sectors having existed in relative isolation from each other, the inclusion of both within the study could also provide practical benefits to the sector by facilitating the sharing of best practices between the countries through the fulfilment of objective four of the research.

As will be further discussed in section 3.5.3, time and financial constraints would likely prevent data collection in the USA from being carried out on a comparable scale to the data collection that would occur in the UK. It would therefore not be possible for the study to fully adopt a comparative design throughout, as without equivalent numbers of participants being obtained in each country the reliability and validity of the research would be compromised.

However, owing to the benefits that the inclusion of American independent libraries would allow, the decision was taken to undertake the cross-sectional research strategy in both countries. The study would treat the libraries from both countries as one overall pool of participants from which to collect data relevant to achieving the research aim and objectives. However, the researcher would endeavour to undertake an additional layer of analysis on this data in order to identify any obvious contrasts between the data from each country that could prove particularly illuminating with regard to developing an overall understanding of the relationship between independent libraries and cultural sustainability.

While any conclusions drawn in relation to these contrasts would have to be tentative, they could indicate possible avenues for further research and provide interim recommendations for future practice. This would therefore also help to contribute to fulfilling objective five of the study, which is 'To offer recommendations for future research and suggestions for improving practice in relation to achieving cultural sustainability in independent libraries and other MLAs'.

3.5 Sampling

3.5.1 Defining the research population

When selecting participants for a research study, it is important to first define the research population. While the population to which the study relates is usually highlighted in the aims and objectives of the research, Saunders et al (2015) stress that an entire 'population may be difficult to research as not all elements or cases may be known to the researcher or easy to access'. It is, therefore, possible for the researcher to 'redefine the population as something more manageable…known as the target population' (p.275).

The focus of this study is on independent libraries. In the UK, the Independent Libraries Association (ILA) is the only body in existence to represent independent libraries and currently has 33 members. While initial investigations revealed that there are a small number of independent libraries in existence in the UK that are not members of the Association, there were two main reasons why the member libraries of the ILA were chosen as the target population for the study:

Pre-established independent status

As discussed in the introduction to the thesis, definitions of what exactly constitutes an independent library can differ, and previous research studies have often struggled to provide a concrete definition as a result. However, the key features of an independent library are generally considered to be a high level of independence in terms of funding and governance, and historic foundations as a proprietary subscription library, endowed library, or as the library of a mechanics' institute or a learned society (Bishop and Rowley, 2012).

Without a clear definition to guide the researcher, selecting participants that fit the criteria for the study could be problematic. However, as prospective members to the ILA must provide details of their foundation, funding, and governance structures before being accepted (ILA, 2018), this would ensure that all participants met the criteria for independence as perceived by the Association itself.

Ease of access

As this study is a collaborative research project with The Portico Library, access to the member libraries of the Association would be facilitated by the fact that that The Portico Library was one of the founding members of the Association and that the library's Librarian acts as the current chair of the Association. In addition, member libraries must also prescribe to the aims and objectives of the Association, which include working towards the promotion and furtherance of independent libraries (ILA, 2018). This would suggest a willingness within the member libraries to be involved in research.

While the use of the members of the ILA would mean the majority of independent libraries in the UK would be included in the target population, the fact that this could at most provide 33 participants was considered a potential issue with regards to the reliability of the study, particularly as a high response rate could not be guaranteed. This led to a number of possible options to increase the pool of potential participants being considered.

Since it had already been discovered that the majority of independent libraries in the UK are members of the ILA, in order to attempt to increase the research sample the decision was taken to consider options abroad. Initially, both Australia and the USA were identified as possibilities, with both appearing to have populations of independent libraries of a comparable scale to the UK. In addition, they were also found to have similar associations to the UK's ILA that could potentially act as gateways to the individual libraries. These associations are the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria in Australia, and the Membership Libraries Group in the USA.

With 101 organisations listed on its website (MIV, 2018), the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria initially appeared to offer the possibility for substantially increasing the pool of potential participants. However, on contacting the association it was discovered that only eight of the organisations listed continued to offer library services, with the rest having had their buildings repurposed as community halls or simply having their existence recorded for historical purposes (Appendix 2). The focus of the association specifically on Mechanics' Institutes could also have proven problematic, as although they would fit within the criteria of independent

libraries it would not offer a direct comparison to the members of the ILA which includes institutions with a much broader range of backgrounds.

In comparison, the Membership Libraries Group (MLG) in the USA, which has 22 members, contains organisations of a similar diversity of backgrounds to the members of the ILA. In a similar manner to the ILA, the criteria for membership of the MLG, which include the need for institutions to be 'financially self-supporting' and not 'part of a larger organization' (Wikipedia, 2018) would also ensure that selected participants fit the criteria required for the study. With initial contact suggesting a willingness by the MLG to be involved and facilitate access to the member libraries (Appendix 3), and financial support being procured from the John Campbell Trust that would enable a research trip to the USA, the decision was taken to include the member organisations of the MLG in the target research population.

3.5.2 Sampling of libraries in the ILA

As will be discussed in section 3.6, the decision was taken to perform two stages of data collection. The first stage would involve document research, analysing the websites of independent libraries in order to fulfil objective two and develop a profile of the organisations and their cultural assets. The second stage would involve semi-structured interviews with professionals working in independent libraries and would focus on fulfilling objectives three and four.

Sampling strategy for Stage one: document research

As Saunders et al (2015:273) note, sampling is used in research when it is 'impossible to collect or analyse all the potential data available…owing to

restrictions of time, money and…access'. However, owing to the small membership of the ILA and the fact that the data required for this stage of the research was easily accessible online, no sampling strategy was required as it was possible to carry out a census of the entire target population.

Sampling strategy for Stage two: semi-structured interviews

With semi-structured interviews requiring the cooperation of participants and generally being a time-consuming task that tends to produce large amounts of in-depth information, a census of the entire population for stage two of the research was unfeasible. A sampling strategy was therefore required. The small size of the target population, together with the fact that the objectives of the research do not require statistical inferences regarding the characteristics of the population, meant that probability sampling 'based on random selection' would be inappropriate and unnecessary (Walliman, 2006:76).

A range of non-probability sampling techniques 'based on non-random selection' were subsequently considered (Walliman, 2006:76). For similar reasons to probability sampling, quota sampling was rejected as the small size of the target population would make it difficult and unnecessary to divide participants into specific groups. While purposive sampling was initially considered as a possibility, with one of the aims of the research being to develop a broad overview of the sector and a lack of previous research available to guide participant selection criteria, this was also rejected.

After considering a number of options, it was decided that volunteer sampling on a self-selection basis would be the most suitable method for this

study. Volunteer sampling techniques are ideal for studies where there is no clear focus for selecting the sample. Moreover, the fact that 'cases that self-select often do so because of their strong feelings or opinions about the research' can be particularly useful in providing insights into underexplored areas of research (Saunders et al, 2015: 303).

While self-selection of participants is often criticised for lowering the likelihood that the sample will be representative, a number of measures were taken to ensure a high response rate and therefore try to minimise this risk. For example, early correspondence with potential participants facilitated by the ILA, together with ongoing promotion of the research during the ILA's annual conferences, achieved a high rate of interest and commitment from organisations willing to be involved in the study. Indeed, according to guidelines that suggest the size of non-probability samples when collecting data from semi-structured interviews should require between five and 30 interviews in order for data saturation to be reached (Saunders et al: 2015:297), it was anticipated that a more than adequate response rate from the 33 libraries in the ILA would easily be achieved.

3.5.3 Sampling of libraries in the MLG

Sampling strategy for Stage one: document research

As with the ILA libraries, the small size of the MLG membership and the fact that the data required for this stage of the research was easily accessible online once again meant that there was no need to develop a sampling strategy, as a census of the entire population would be possible.

Sampling strategy for Stage two: semi-structured interviews

As previously discussed in section 3.4.1, sampling of participants in the USA should ideally have occurred according to the same techniques and on a comparable scale to the sampling of participants in the UK. However, volunteer sampling techniques would have been difficult to implement due to the difficulty in including all volunteering organisations as many of the institutions in the MLG were geographically remote from each other.

Furthermore, although it could have been possible to arrange remote interviews by telephone or Skype to avoid having to travel to each library individually, the fact that the 'lack of visual cues' that 'provide much of the richness and nuance that is possible in a face-to face interaction' (King and Horrocks, 2010:82) would be lost in remote interviewing raised concerns that the data collected may not be of a comparable quality to the face-to-face interviews. The decision to use card-based interviews to aid in the clarification of complex terms and to provide the opportunity to consider the relationship between particular concepts (see section 3.6.2.3) provided further justification for conducting all interviews in person, as it would have been impossible to implement the same interview schedule through remote interviewing and this would have caused difficulties in making direct comparisons between the data collected.

A different strategy would therefore have to be adopted for selecting participants for stage two of the research in the USA. With one of the intentions of this aspect of the research being to capitalise on the opportunity to share best practices between the libraries in each country, purposive

sampling of what is often described as ‘extreme’ cases was considered the most suitable option. While not aiming to be representative of the target population, extreme case sampling involves focusing on unusual or special cases that, through their unique qualities, can help to develop understanding or explain more typical cases (Saunders et al, 2015:301).

This stage of the research was carried out around 12 months after the first stage of data collection in both the UK and USA, and around two months after the second stage of data collection in the UK. The cases selected could therefore be chosen according to the information collected during stage one of the research in the USA, which would highlight any particularly unusual or successful organisations that may be of interest. Particular issues raised during the interviews that were carried out in the UK could also act as a further guide in the selection of these cases.

3.6 Data collection and analysis

As mentioned in the previous section, the collection of empirical data comprised two stages. The first stage of document research involved a qualitative analysis of the libraries’ websites to fulfil objective two of the research and develop a profile of the libraries and their cultural heritage assets. The second stage employed semi-structured interviews with professionals working in the libraries and focused on fulfilling objectives three and four. The interview data was then used to establish understanding of the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability as well as the challenges to and best practices for achieving sustainability at an

organisational level. Details of data collection at each stage are presented below.

3.6.1 Stage one: Document research

3.6.1.1 Data collection methods

The focus of the first stage of data collection was on fulfilling objective two of the research, which required the development of a profile of independent libraries and their cultural heritage assets and a consideration of their perceived cultural value. As this would provide the baseline for the study and would be used in the development of the interview schedule in the second stage of data collection, it was crucial that this profile could be built quickly and in the early stages of the research process. While it may have been possible to contact each library individually to provide such information, this would have been a time-consuming process and, with little previous information available that could inform the development of a questionnaire or similar data collection tool, it would also have been difficult to ascertain what questions would need to be asked to ensure a comprehensive profile of each library was developed. Therefore, document research was undertaken in the form of a survey of web presence.

A preliminary survey of the web presence of the independent libraries included within the research sample revealed that all of the libraries already provided detailed organisational information on their individual websites. It was decided that the most efficient and thorough method of obtaining this data would be through conducting document research and analysing the content of these websites. Document research utilises sources of written or

pictorial data, including virtual documents such as websites, that are already in existence and are 'simply…waiting to be assembled and analysed' (Bryman, 2012:543). With the information required already available, it would not be necessary to develop a data collection tool to generate data to be analysed. This would therefore accelerate the development of the initial profile of the sector, especially as the search limits had already been predefined to the websites of the independent libraries identified in the research sample. Extensive searches for relevant documents that can often hinder the prompt completion of web-based research would therefore be unnecessary (Bryman, 2012).

A further advantage of using such documents as a source for data collection is that they are non-reactive and have not been produced specifically for the purpose of the research. It is possible to largely discount a reactive effect as a limitation on the validity of the data (Bryman, 2012:543). However, the collection of data from documents is not entirely unproblematic. Scott (1990, cited in Bryman, 2012:544) emphasises that the quality of documents can vary widely and this can affect the reliability and validity of the data collected. Scott therefore suggests four criteria by which to consider the quality of documents used in research: authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning.

Authenticity relates to whether the evidence is 'genuine and of unquestionable origin' (Scott, 1990, cited in Bryman, 2012:544). As the research would focus on the official websites of the independent libraries in the research sample, their authenticity as sources of data was relatively assured. It was also likely that the meaning of the information they contain

would be ‘clear and comprehensible’ to the researcher (p.544) since they had been produced with the intent of providing an accessible overview of the organisations for the general public.

The credibility and representativeness of the websites would be more difficult to assess. While websites can be considered non-reactive to the purpose of a research study, it is inevitable that they have still been produced for a specific purpose and intend ‘to get a particular view across’ (Bryman, 2012:551). Regarding organisational websites, it can be expected that organisations will aim to portray themselves in a positive light in order to attract new clientele or new investors. It is therefore possible that some of the independent libraries included in the research sample may, for example, exaggerate their assets on their websites and portray their everyday operations in a more favourable light in order to bolster their public image. This could in turn interfere with the accuracy of the profile developed during the research process.

Despite these criticisms regarding the credibility of the information provided in such documents, there are potential benefits to including the data that they contain within the study. As Atkinson and Coffey (2011, cited in Bryman 2012:554-555) argue, while they may not be able to give the researcher ‘transparent representations’ of an ‘underlying organisational reality’, if taken in the context of ‘what they were supposed to accomplish and who they were written for’ they can still provide valuable information and can be considered as ‘a distinct level of ‘reality’ in their own right’.

While the websites may have been produced by professionals working in independent libraries with the intention of promoting their organisations, one of the intentions of collecting the empirical data was to gain an understanding of the perceived cultural value of the libraries' cultural heritage assets. As such, a consideration of the way that these assets are represented on the libraries' websites would in fact be highly beneficial to achieving the research objective despite the fact that they may not be wholly 'transparent".

One further criticism to consider regarding using web documents within research is that the internet is in a state of 'constant flux' and, as a result, exactly how representative a website is on a particular topic is difficult to ascertain (Bryman, 2012:554). For example, regarding the websites of the independent libraries, it cannot be guaranteed that the information provided is up-to-date and representative of current organisational realities. This could lead to an inaccurate representation of organisations in the research sample should their situation have changed since their website was last updated.

To minimise the possibility of any inaccuracies in the data collected from the websites, a number of steps were taken by the researcher to enable the triangulation of the data. For example, while the main focus of the document research was on the official websites of the libraries, the researcher also sought to corroborate the information provided on these websites by examining other sources of online information provided by the libraries. A preliminary survey of the libraries' web presence revealed that along with their organisational websites, the majority of the libraries also maintained a social media presence, having at least one or one or more

social media accounts on platforms such as Twitter or Facebook (Table 3.0). Owing to the ease with which content can be added to such accounts and the expectations that social media outputs should constantly be updated, these would potentially provide more detailed or more up-to-date information than was available on the websites which could be incorporated into the profiles if necessary.

Table 3.0 The social media presence of independent libraries

	Facebook	**Twitter**	**Other (Instagram,Pinterest, Tumblr, Flickr blog, etc.)**	**None**
ILA libraries	25	23	9	6
MLG libraries	22	15	14	0

In addition, it would also be possible for the researcher to identify and resolve any inaccuracies in the information provided on the websites during the second phase of data collection. Visiting the libraries in person and conducting interviews with their professional staff, it would be possible to gain an 'insider's perspective' on the libraries, which would be invaluable in authenticating the data collected from the websites and ensuring that a reliable and representative profile of the sector and its cultural heritage assets was established.

3.6.1.2 Gaining access and ethical considerations

Gaining access to the required data was relatively straightforward, as all of the websites could easily be accessed by either following links from the ILA's

website (ILA, 2018) and the MLG's Wikipedia page (Wikipedia, 2018), or by conducting a search for the library's name through Google.

The use of web documents to generate the profile of the sector presented no ethical issues, as the data they contain had been 'deliberately and voluntarily made available in the public internet domain' and therefore did not require the researcher to consider issues of privacy or gain informed consent from participants (Hewson et al, 2003, cited in Bryman, 2012:679). Other ethical considerations regarding 'harm to participants' or the deception of participants could also be discounted as there was no direct interaction with the organisations or individual participants at this stage (Diener and Crandall (1978), cited in Bryman, 2012:135).

3.6.1.3 Qualitative content analysis of the data from ILA/MLG websites

To generate the profile of the sector from the websites, a qualitative content analysis was undertaken. According to Bryman (2012:557), qualitative content analysis consists of a 'searching-out of underlying themes in the materials being analysed'. Unlike quantitative content analysis, which uses preconceived codes in order to quantify the number of instances a particular theme or point of interest occurs in the materials being analysed, the emphasis of qualitative content analysis is upon 'allowing categories to emerge out of data' (Bryman, 2012:291). It could therefore be seen to be in line with the philosophical underpinnings of the study and would be appropriate for ensuring an in-depth profile of the sector was developed that would not be restricted by preconceived notions of the kind of data that needs to be recorded.

Qualitative content analysis is one of the most prevalent approaches for qualitatively analysing documents, but it does not have the same kind of set methods for extracting themes as quantitative content analysis. There are however certain procedures that can be considered typical of the method. These include the search for recurring ideas in the data that are relevant to the research focus and may indicate an emerging theme, as well as the constant revision of the themes or categories distilled from the documents, with themes being refined or new themes being generated as the research progresses (Krippendorff, 2013).

To record the data from the websites, the researcher began by listing each of the libraries alphabetically in rows in an Excel spreadsheet. To initiate the data collection, two generic categories that could be expected to be applicable to every organisation were first listed in columns across the top of the spreadsheet. These were the type of library (e.g. subscription library, mechanics' institute and so forth) and the date that the library was founded. Each website was then examined page by page, with a new column being added to record further data each time a new category was identified. If a new category was identified on a website that had not been considered on previously examined websites, the researcher would return to these and conduct a further search for the relevant data.

To assist in the later detection of any similarities and differences between the libraries in the UK and in the US, separate spreadsheets were generated for the libraries in each country. The researcher initially focused upon the libraries in the UK, generating new categories according to the process outlined above. Once completed, these categories were then transferred to

the US spreadsheet and a search was then conducted for relevant data on the US libraries' websites. If new categories were identified in the US libraries, the researcher would again return to examine each of the previously examined websites from both the UK and US libraries to ensure that all relevant data had been recorded. This process was continued until the researcher felt that data saturation had been achieved. This process led to 17 categories being identified (Table 3.1). An example of some of the data collected is provided in the screenshot of the Excel Spreadsheet provided in Appendix 4.

Table 3.1 Categories identified through the content analysis of independent library websites

Type of library	Governance	Collections
Date founded	Staffing	Funding
Mission statement (or equivalent)	Benefits of membership	Online catalogue availability
Organisational history	Access	Additional artefacts
Charitable status	Subscription/entry fee	Additional activities
Volunteers	Collection access	

The level of analysis carried out in relation to each category varied substantially depending upon how much detail was required. For example, categories that sought to provide practical information regarding each library's conditions of access or whether or not they have charitable status would not require more than surface level analysis to garner the required information from each website. Meanwhile, categories that aimed to provide information regarding each library's collections or additional artefacts would

require far deeper analysis, particularly as the information collected in relation to such assets would be crucial to building an understanding of the perceived cultural value of the libraries.

The researcher therefore endeavoured to capture enough data to build a rich picture of these assets. For example, along with collecting more general data regarding the size of the collections held by each library, in-depth information regarding their contents was also included. In addition, direct quotations that were considered illustrative of the value placed on the libraries' different assets were also included where possible, as it was felt that these could prove invaluable in the development of an overview of the perceived cultural value of the libraries in the later stages of the analysis.

Once completed, the initial content analysis provided the researcher with a profile of the sector and its cultural assets. As previously discussed, this would act as a baseline for the study. Not only would it prove useful in the development of the interview schedule (see section 3.6.2.2), but as will be illustrated in Chapter Four, it would also provide an invaluable source of reference during the interpretation of the interview data.

However, since objective two also required an understanding of the 'perceived cultural value' of the libraries be established, a further thematic analysis of the data was necessary. As this would require connections to be made between the data in order to compile a list of relevant themes, the decision was taken to import the data into NVivo, which could provide a number of functions to facilitate this process (Bazeley, 2007).

The search for themes in data is an activity shared by many approaches to qualitative data analysis, including grounded theory, critical discourse analysis and qualitative content analysis. In general, a theme constitutes a category identified by the researcher in the data that relates to the research focus and provides a 'basis for a theoretical understanding' of the data and which can also 'make a theoretical contribution to the literature relating to the research focus' (Bryman, 2012:580). As with qualitative content analysis, there is no specific set of procedures to follow when conducting a thematic analysis. However, Ryan and Bernard (2003, cited in Bryman, 2012:580) identify eight key features that the researcher should look out for when attempting to identify relevant themes in their data. These include 'repetitions', 'indigenous typologies or categories', 'metaphors and analogies', 'transitions', 'similarities and differences', 'linguistic connectors', 'missing data', and 'theory related material'.

While the researcher remained mindful of these eight key features while analysing the data, the presence of 'repetitions', 'similarities and differences', and 'theory related material' proved to be the most useful in developing relevant insights from the data collected. The identification of repetitions across the data sources was instrumental in ensuring that the themes identified were of relevance to organisations across the sector. The detection of similarities and differences between the data collected from each library's website would also be useful for detecting any contrasts between the information collected from the libraries in the UK and USA.

Meanwhile, the identification of theory related material was integral to ensuring the themes developed were relevant to the research focus and

were informed by the wider discussions surrounding cultural sustainability explored during the literature review. A particular example of this was the identification of both tangible and intangible heritage assets, which reflected the discussions surrounding the different forms of heritage that must be sustained for cultural sustainability to be possible, and which hitherto had not been discussed in relation to the contributions of MLAs to cultural sustainability.

This process enabled the data to be recategorized according to five key themes. As illustrated by Figure 3.1, these five key themes were further divided into subthemes, providing an in-depth account of the libraries' perceived cultural value as conveyed on their websites.

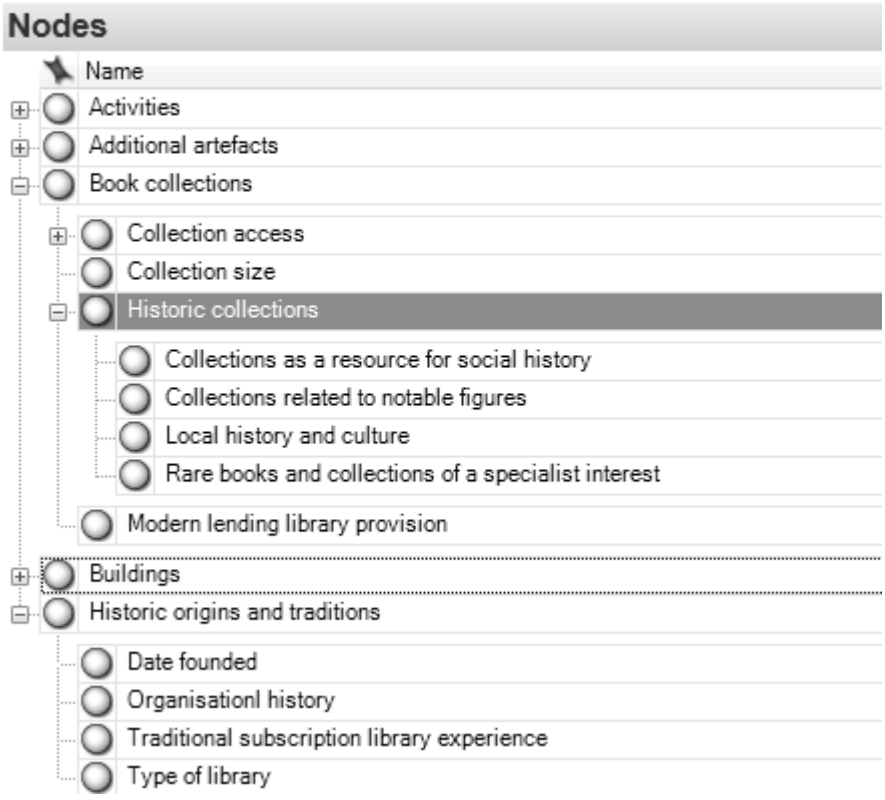

Figure 3.1 Example of the themes and subthemes developed through the thematic analysis of the data from the libraries' websites

Another important process adopted during the analysis of the data was the limited quantification of the data collected using bar charts. Limited quantification can be especially beneficial in qualitative research as it can provide the reader with a sense of the prevalence of the particular issues being discussed, thus counteracting a common criticism of qualitative research being too anecdotal (Bryman, 2012). In addition, the presentation of the data collected in this way also aided in the detection of similarities and differences between the libraries, which was again particularly useful in drawing out any contrasts between libraries in the UK and USA.

3.6.2 Stage two: Semi-structured interviews

3.6.2.1 Data collection methods

The focus of this stage of the research was on fulfilling objectives three and four, which require 'understanding of the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability' and the 'challenges to achieving sustainability in independent libraries at an organisational level' to be established, together with 'examples of best practice for overcoming these challenges'. As the aim of this stage of the research was to gain in-depth understanding of these issues, the decision was taken to undertake semi-structured interviews as they would enable qualitative data to be generated that would provide deeper insights into these issues from the professional viewpoints of the participants (King and Horrocks, 2010).

As will be further explained in section 3.6.2.2, the interviews were guided by categories derived from the previous literature. One set of

interview questions (Appendix 5) developed from these categories was used for all interviews, thus enabling the research to 'elicit the same information from all subjects to develop the broadest possible understanding of the topic' (Gorman and Clayton, 2005:49), while also enabling useful comparisons to be made between the practices of each library. However, the semi-structured nature of the interview also allowed for the interviewee's responses to guide the direction of the interview, with the interviewer being able to pursue any additional questions that may arise from the interviewee's responses (Grix, 2010). This allowed for any 'unexpected issues and information' to be captured (Somekh, 2012:62).

3.6.2.2 Establishing the focus of the interview questions

According to the two separate focuses of objectives three and four, it was decided that the interview should be divided into two separate sections to ensure each area was given as equal as possible consideration during the interview process. The first section of the interview would focus on the contributions of the libraries to cultural sustainability, while the second section would focus on considering challenges and best practices for achieving sustainability at an organisational level.

Since the overarching aim of this stage of the research was to collect empirical data to develop understanding of the relationship between MLAs and cultural sustainability, it was important that the data collected built on the previous body of knowledge surrounding the topic. For this reason, the researcher returned to the previous literature on MLAs and cultural

sustainability to develop an overview of the key topics that would need to be covered during the interview process.

With regard to developing understanding of the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability, the model proposed by Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014) for developing cultural policies to improve the contributions of museums to cultural sustainability clearly provided the most comprehensive account of the relationship between an MLA and cultural sustainability available. In addition, Soini and Birkeland's (2014) review of the discourse surrounding cultural sustainability was identified as one of the most comprehensive accounts of cultural sustainability more generally.

However, Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014) proposes seven key responsibilities for museums within the 'parameters of cultural sustainability' (p.566) and Soini and Birkeland (2014) identifies seven slightly different 'storylines' within the discourse on cultural sustainability (p.213). It would, therefore, have been difficult to cover all of these topics within the time available for the interviews, especially as a significant portion of this time needed to be allocated to covering the challenges to and best practices for achieving sustainability.

As such, the researcher endeavoured to develop a simplified overview of these topics for the purpose of the interview by combining similar topics into categories. Topics that were not considered to be within the remit of the study were excluded. These included the 'storylines' of 'Economic viability', 'Eco-cultural resilience', and 'Eco-cultural civilization' (Soini and Birkeland, 2014:217-218). The topics were also compared to data collected from the

independent libraries' websites during the first stage of the research in order to reflect on their relevance to the libraries. As depicted in Figure 3.2, this resulted in the development of four key categories that would guide the discussion on the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability. These categories were 'Heritage Preservation', 'Cultural Identity', 'Cultural Vitality', and 'Cultural Diversity'.

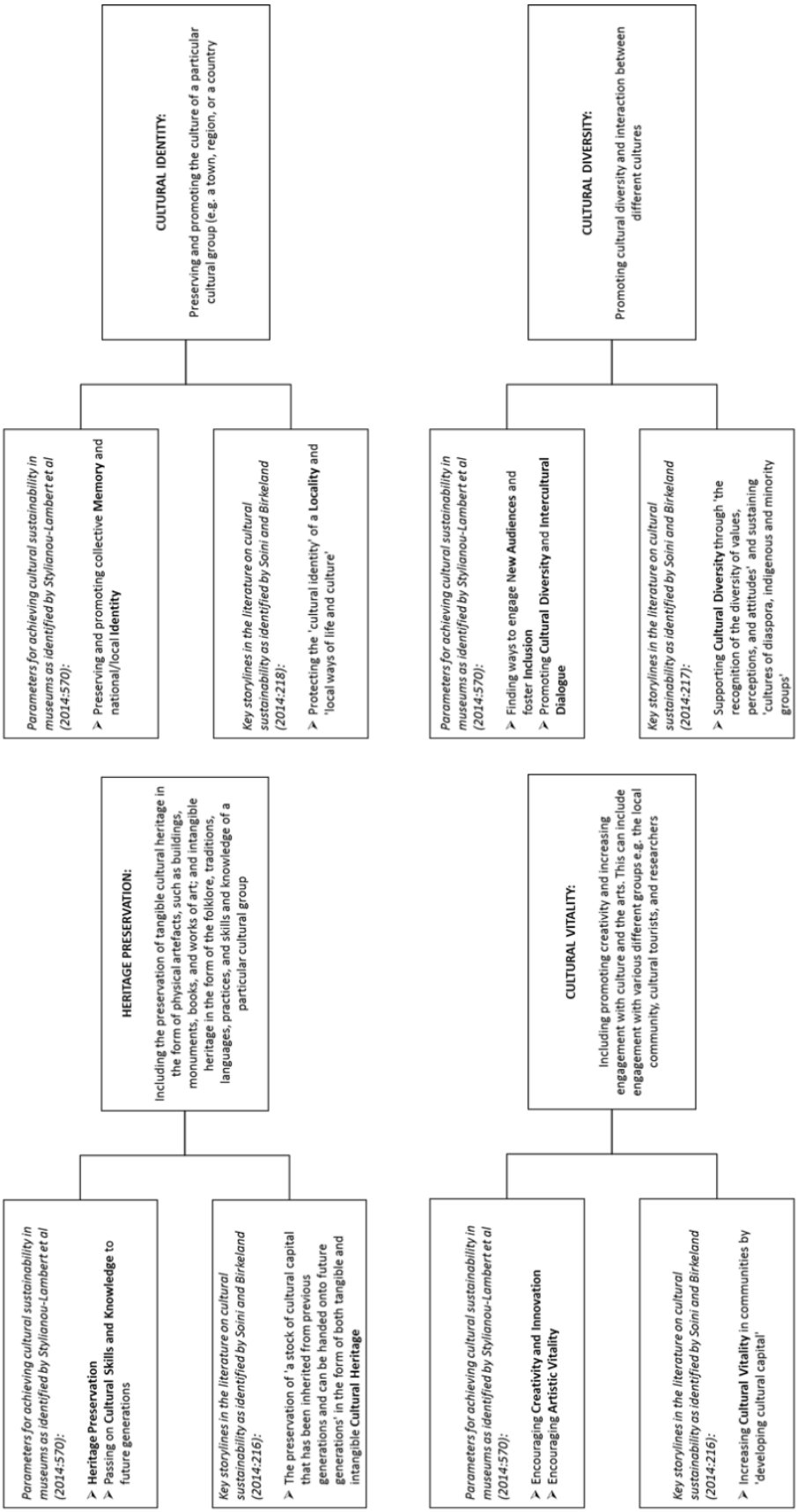

Figure 3.2 Development of the four categories to guide the interview questions regarding the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability

Once these categories had been established for guiding the development of questions related to the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability, the researcher once again returned to the previous literature to identify the key topics that would need to be covered to fulfil objective four of the research. The critical analysis in chapter two identified a need to develop a holistic perspective on sustainability at an organisational level. To reflect this requirement, the interview schedule would need to provide the opportunity to consider the challenges and best practices for achieving sustainability in independent libraries in a similarly holistic manner.

According to these requirements, the researcher identified the eight factors employed in Newman's (2010) framework for investigating the sustainability of archives as a particularly useful method for achieving a holistic perspective on the sustainability of collections-based organisations. As with the development of the categories for investigating the potential contributions of the libraries to cultural sustainability, the researcher used the profile of the libraries developed in the first stage of the research as a point of reference by which to determine the suitability of the different factors suggested by Newman (2010) for use within the context of investigating sustainability in independent libraries.

Since Newman's (2010) study was conducted in archives, it is unsurprising that some adaptations had to be made, however, seven of the eight factors were initially considered to provide a useful basis by which to consider the sustainability of the libraries. These included 'Governance', 'Funding', 'Skilled Staff', 'Collaboration', 'Dynamism', 'Preservation', and

‘Community Engagement’ (p.62). Since the analysis of the library’s websites had revealed that many of the independent libraries hold both community and organisational archives, the eighth factor of ‘Archival Practices’ could also be considered relevant to the sector. However, as they also hold collections of books as well as other artefacts, the decision was taken to replace this factor with the broader term of ‘Collections’ which could encompass all of these different forms of collection. In addition, this broader term could also accommodate the factor of ‘Preservation’ and thus help to consolidate the list of factors for consideration during the interview process.

As will further be discussed in section 3.6.2.5, pilot interviews with two professionals working in independent libraries highlighted the need to alter the phrasing of some of the factors to further ensure their relevance for collecting data in the independent library sector. This included changing ‘Collaboration’ to ‘External Support’ to reflect the broader range of support received by the libraries that participants felt was crucial for their survival and changing ‘Community Engagement’ to ‘Community and Users’ to reflect the fact that it was felt that a distinction should be made between the local community and the library’s own community of users. In addition, the factor of ‘Skilled Staff’ was also changed to ‘Staffing’ to enable a broader range of issues related to the staffing of the libraries to be covered.

The decision was also taken at this stage to drop the factor of ‘Dynamism’ since it was found that the focus of the questions on considering challenges and best practices led to participants discussing this factor

spontaneously in relation to the other six factors and it was therefore unnecessary for it to receive further coverage as a separate factor. As depicted in Figure 3.3, this process of refinement led to six key factors that were used to guide the creation of a holistic perspective on the challenges and best practices to achieving sustainability in independent libraries. These were 'Governance', 'Funding', 'Staffing', 'External Support', Collections', and 'Community and Users'.

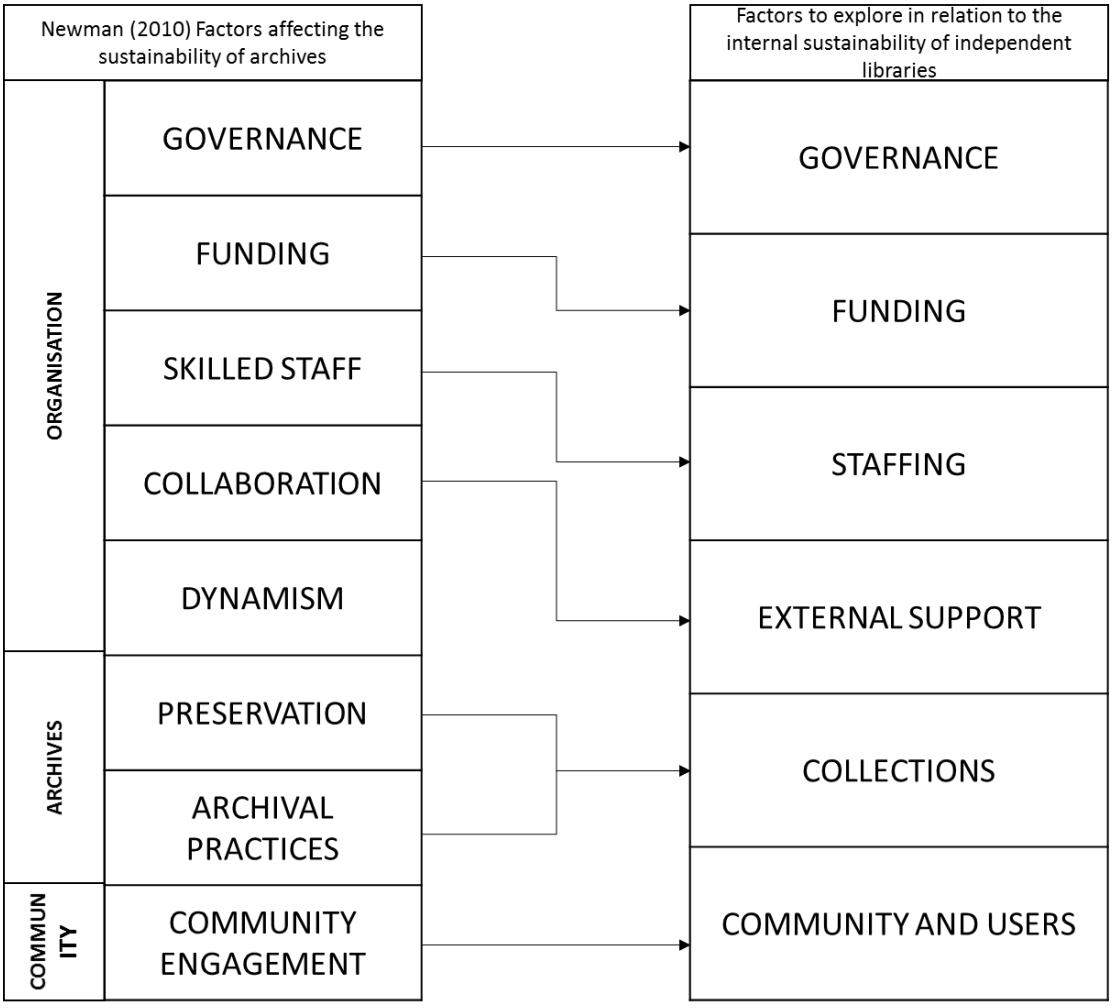

Figure 3.3 Development of the six factors to guide the interview questions regarding the challenges and best practices to achieving sustainability in independent libraries

3.6.2.3 The use of the card-based game method

One issue that arose early on in the development of the interview schedule was how it would be possible to focus the interviewees' thoughts on all of the key categories that needed to be covered. In addition, since it would be unlikely that many of the participants would have in-depth knowledge of cultural sustainability and what exactly is meant by terms such as 'cultural identity' and 'cultural diversity' when used in this context, it would also be necessary to find a means by which to effectively convey this information to participants during the interview.

To resolve this issue, the researcher decided to employ the use of a card-based game method. Although more commonplace in commercial qualitative market research, Rowley et al (2012) report on several cases in which the method has been successfully used during semi-structured interviews in academic research projects (Hanna and Rowley, 2010; Jones and Rowley, 2009; Muethel and Hoegl, 2008; Vasileiou, Hartley et al 2009). The method involves creating cards 'with words or images to represent the concepts or terms that are central to the topics in the semi-structured interview', which can then act as 'visual cues to facilitate, focus, and prompt reflection' (Rowley et al 2012:93).

The technique is reported as having numerous benefits to improving the quality of semi-structured interviews. Considered of particular benefit to this study was the fact that the cards can prove useful in exploring definitions and facilitating the discussion of complex concepts. In addition, they can help to

provide qualitative validation of theoretical models, providing the opportunity to explore ‘issues related to components’ and the ‘relationships between components’ of a model (Rowley et al 2012:95).

With this in mind, two sets of cards were developed to guide each section of the interview. The first set included the terms ‘Heritage Preservation’, ‘Cultural Identity’, ‘Cultural Vitality’, and ‘Cultural Diversity’ together with their respective definitions to ensure clarity of their meaning. These cards were used to guide the discussion on the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability. The second set of cards included the six factors of ‘Governance’, ‘Staffing’, ‘Funding’, External Support’, ‘Community and Users’, and ‘Collections’ and were used to guide the discussion on the challenges and best practices to achieving sustainability.

3.6.2.4 Devising the interview questions

Determining the questions that should be asked during each stage of the interview and to guide the discussion around each card was an iterative process which required consideration of the objectives of the research and the kinds of questions that would need to be asked to fulfil these objectives. The questions were continually reviewed and revised until the researcher felt that the interview schedule would be able to provide comprehensive answers from the interviewees that would cover all of the necessary topics.

Open ended questions were used so as to enable the interviewees to express themselves fully, with restrictions on their responses being limited as far

as possible. Initially, four key questions were devised to ensure the main objectives were covered. The first question 'What are the key things that you do in each of these areas?' was related to the first set of cards and invited the participants to provide details of the contributions of their organisation to cultural sustainability according to the four key areas identified on the cards.

The three subsequent questions, 'What are the main challenges you face in this area?', 'What have you done to overcome these challenges?' and 'Is there anything that you think could be done to improve things further?' related to the second section of the interview, and would be asked in turn as each of the organisational factors on the cards were discussed. These questions would aim to fulfil objectives three and four, helping to identify challenges to and best practices for achieving sustainability in independent libraries.

As well as these questions that encouraged participants to focus on the concepts on individual cards, a further layer of questioning was embedded into the interview schedule which aimed to encourage participants to consider the relationships between the cards and how important they deemed each concept to be in relation to either the contributions of the organisation to cultural sustainability, or with regard to ensuring their organisation's sustainability. This involved asking the participant to order each set of cards according to the way they perceived their importance, and to reflect on why they had chosen to order the cards in that way.

3.6.2.5 Pilot interviews and ongoing refinement of the interview schedule

The completion of a series of pilot interviews was integral to the further development of the interview schedule. The interview was initially piloted with a member of the supervisory team who had a background in public libraries. While the differences within organisational setting from independent libraries meant that not all of the questions posed would be relevant, it did enable the wording of the questions and the overall structure of the interview to be reviewed.

A particular example of an improvement that was made after this stage was the addition of an introductory question asking the participant to talk about themselves and their role at the library, and a concluding question asking whether they felt that there was anything else that needed to be added. As well as improving the overall sense of structure to the interview, these questions were felt to be integral to ensuring that participants felt at ease at the beginning of the interview and that they were given the opportunity to discuss any important issues that may not have been covered before the interview was terminated.

Another important consideration that came to light at this stage was the need to ensure that if participants made reference to particular cards on the table with physical gestures, the researcher would have to verbalise which card was being referred to for the purposes of clarity in the transcribed data. For a similar reason, it was also decided that a camera would be used to take photographs of the order in which participants placed the cards and any subsequent changes that might be made.

The interview schedule was then further refined through two pilot interviews undertaken with professionals working in independent libraries. In addition to the changes that were made to the sustainability factors outlined in section 3.6.2.2, these interviews also resulted in several further changes being made to the wording and structuring of the questions to improve the overall flow of the interview. For example, during the first of the two interviews the participant struggled to move between discussing the different organisational facets, and as a result the answers to these questions seemed to lack detail and coherence. It was therefore decided to add an additional question relating to each card whereby the interviewee would be asked to briefly summarise that aspect of their organisation. For instance, during the discussion related to 'Governance', the participant would first be asked 'How is the library governed?', while during the discussion related to 'Staffing', the participant would be asked 'How is the library staffed?'.

Although this information had already largely been garnered through the analysis of the libraries' websites, while not necessarily providing the opportunity to gain new insights these questions could act as a means by which to gently introduce each new area of discussion and focus the interviewee's thoughts. Indeed, the inclusion of these questions in the final pilot interview appeared to serve this purpose well, with the participant moving more comfortably between the different facets and providing more elaborate and enthusiastic answers.

The semi-structured nature of the interview also allowed for new emerging topics to arise during the official interviews. Transcribing the interviews in concurrence with the ongoing interviewing process rather than at the end once all of the interviews had been completed was particularly beneficial in helping to identify these emerging topics. These were then added to the interview schedule as a series of prompts to be used with subsequent interviewees to encourage further exploration and enable the 'broadest possible understanding' of these emerging topics (Gorman and Clayton, 2005:49).

For example, in the initial few interviews it became clear that issues such as the 'length of time for actions to be approved' appeared to be a common concern with regard to the 'Governance' card, and 'lack of staff' appeared to be a common concern related to the 'Staffing' card. A note of these issues was then made in the relevant section of the interview schedule to act as prompts to encourage subsequent interviewees to provide further insights into these particular issues.

3.6.2.6 Gaining access and ethical considerations

3.6.2.6.1 Gaining access

The identification of suitable participants to approach for the interviews was facilitated by contact lists of individuals working in each library that had been provided by the ILA and MLG. According to the volunteer sampling technique described in section 3.5.2, contacts from all of the 33 libraries in the ILA were sent a personalised invitation email, detailing the aims of the research and the

requirements of the interview process (Appendix 6). Meanwhile, as previously stated in section 3.5.3, the selection of suitable participants to approach from the MLG libraries according to purposive sampling would also require the researcher to use the data collected in stage one of the research to identify organisations with unique qualities whose inclusion in the research may provide particularly useful insights relevant to the research focus.

To decide on which organisations to contact, the researcher therefore reviewed the information collected on each library in the MLG and noted down any with particularly unusual attributes that may have made them worthy of closer investigation. This list was then further refined according to practicalities related to the geographic locations of the libraries, and how feasible it would be to include them within the research trip according to the financial resources and time available. This process provided the researcher with a list of seven libraries, all of which were sent personalised invitation emails which had been adapted to reflect the specific purposes of the research trip to the USA (Appendix 7).

Attached to each of the invitation emails sent were the participant information sheet (Appendix 8) and the participant consent form (Appendix 9). As well as providing a more detailed summary of the purposes of the research and further information about what the interview process would involve, these also gave details of ethical considerations relating to the University's anonymity and data protection policies. While participants would be provided with hardcopies of this information to review and discuss with the researcher in

person before each interview commenced, providing this information in advance of the interviews ensured each participant was given enough time to reflect on what was being asked of them so that they could make an informed decision as to whether or not take part.

Of the 33 ILA libraries contacted, 23 responded with an interest in being involved in the study. While a follow-up email was sent two weeks after the initial email to the ten who didn't respond, these remained beyond contact. Further emails were exchanged to arrange a mutually convenient time for the interview with each of the 23 respondents, and while four of these had to subsequently decline over difficulties in making these arrangements, 19 interviews were eventually secured. Meanwhile, responses were gained from all of the seven MLG libraries contacted in the USA and after a similar email exchange to arrange suitable times for the interviews, it was possible to secure the involvement of all seven of the individuals contacted. Once the details were agreed with all of the libraries, the researcher sent an email a few days prior to each interview to confirm arrangements with the participant.

3.6.2.6.2 Ethical considerations

The involvement of participants in this stage of the research meant that an in-depth consideration of potential ethical issues was required. Ethical issues in social research can be broken down into four key areas. These are whether harm can come to participants, whether informed consent has been given, whether the research will cause an invasion of privacy, and if deception is involved (Diener and Crandall, 1978, cited in Bryman, 2012:130).

The nature of the research meant that physical harm to participants was unlikely. While there may have been the possibility that some of the questions asked could cause some emotional discomfort, this was also considered unlikely as the focus of the questions was on considering organisational processes rather than the personal lives of the participants. The issue of deception was also of minimal concern as it was unnecessary to intentionally deceive the participants about the purpose of the research in any way. Indeed, efforts were made to ensure transparency throughout the interview process, with the purpose of the research being made explicit in the participant information sheet provided to prospective interviewees when they were initially invited to take part, and the opportunity being given for participants to review this information and ask any further questions before the interview proceeded.

Together with the participant information sheet, the consent form was integral to ensuring informed consent was gained from each participant. As well as providing detailed information on the purpose of the study and what would be expected of the individual during the interview, these documents also provided information on the efforts that would be made to ensure confidentiality and anonymity as well as the intended outcomes of the research and how the data collected would be put to use. The right to withdraw from the research at any time was also made explicit in these documents. Further to this, participants were emailed copies of their transcribed interview to provide them with the opportunity to verify their accuracy and to ensure that they were still willing to have their information included in the research (Somekh et al, 2012).

With regards to ensuring privacy, participants were informed that their data would be stored securely, being accessible only to the researcher and being destroyed once the project was completed. Participants were also informed of the efforts that would be made to protect their anonymity. As well as being an important ethical consideration, ensuring that participants were aware of these efforts was also integral to making sure they felt at ease to discuss issues candidly and in a way that would be more likely to provide the most revealing and valuable data for the study.

Individual names and specific details that could have enabled participants to be easily identified were removed from the data, including information related to specific locations, job titles, and so forth. To enable the data collected from each interview to remain distinguishable from each other, each interview transcribed was assigned a code. These were UK1-UK19 for the ILA libraries, and US1-US 7 for the MLG libraries. However, while these efforts were made to protect the privacy of the participants, it was also necessary to ensure that they were aware that their anonymity could not be completely guaranteed. Indeed, as Somekh et al (2012:26) argue, 'the context' described in research interviews 'unless massively disguised, often reveals clues to identity even when names and places are changed'. The limited size of the independent library sector and the unique qualities of many of the institutions under investigation could have increased this possibility. A caveat was therefore included in the participant information sheet to ensure participants were fully aware of this potential issue.

3.6.2.7 Collecting data from professionals in ILA/MLG libraries

19 interviews were conducted in the ILA libraries between August 2016 and September 2016, while seven interviews were conducted in the MLG libraries during the research trip to the US in November 2016. A summary of the participants and the length of each interview is provided in Table 3.2 below. All interviews were conducted face-to-face at the libraries in quiet spaces chosen by the interviewees.

Table 3.2 List of interview participants. Key to library types: Subs=Subscription Library, Mech=Mechanics' Institute, Res = Research Library, Pub = Public Library

Code	Gender	Type of Library	Length of interview
UK1	Female	Subs	38 minutes
UK2	Male	Mech	33 minutes
UK3	Female	Mech	47 minutes
UK4	Male	Res	45 minutes
UK5	Male	Pub	32 minutes
UK6	Female	Res	1 hour 13 minutes
UK7	Female	Subs	34 minutes
UK8	Male	Mech	1 hour 10 minutes
UK9	Female	Subs	42 minutes
UK10	Male	Subs	35 minutes
UK11	Female	Subs	35 minutes
UK12	Female	Subs	38 minutes
UK13	Female	Soc	58 minutes
UK14	Male	Subs	56 minutes
UK15	Female	Subs	49 minutes
UK16	Male	Subs	54 minutes
UK17	Male	Soc	58 minutes
UK18	Male	Pub	39 minutes
UK19	Female	Res	22 minutes
US1	Male	Subs	33 minutes
US2	Male	Subs	34 minutes
US3	Male	Subs	1 hour 21 minutes
US4	Female	Res	37 minutes
US5	Female	Subs	40 minutes
US6	Female	Mech	36 minutes
US7	Female	Mech	46 minutes

While the length of the interviews varied from between 22 minutes and 1 hour and 22 minutes, the majority were between 30 minutes and 1 hour in length. Only one interview was significantly shorter at 22 minutes, this was due to unforeseen circumstances that led to the participant having to cut the interview short. Of the three that took significantly longer than an hour, this can generally be attributed to unexpected interruptions from colleagues that distracted the participants for a period of time during the interviewing process. While 25 of the interviews were fully recorded with the consent of the participants, one interview could not be recorded owing to a malfunction with the recording device. In that instance, detailed notes were taken and a reflection of the key issues covered was written immediately after the interview had ended.

Each interview began with a brief introduction to the research study to remind the participant of the topic and to ensure they were clear on the purpose of the interview. Participants were asked whether they had reviewed the participant information sheet and consent form, and the opportunity was provided to discuss any concerns regarding confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were also asked whether they would be happy to have the interview recorded. Once the participant had agreed that they were happy to continue, a signed copy of the consent form was acquired.

After being briefed on the structure of the interview and how the cards would be used to explore different concepts, the interview commenced by asking the participant to tell the interviewer about themselves and their role at their library. While this would provide useful information by which to

contextualise the participant's subsequent answers, it also acted as a useful ice-breaking question to put the participant at ease.

The first set of cards on the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability were then introduced and placed on the table in front of the participant. The participant was then asked to explain the key activities that constituted their organisation's contribution to each area, and how important they felt that this was to the overall aims of the organisation. Participants were encouraged to order the cards according to how they perceived their importance, and to then discuss each one in turn. Once completed, participants would be asked whether they were happy with the way in which they had ordered the cards and given the opportunity to change the order and justify this change if necessary. During this stage of the interview, the opportunity was also taken to photograph the order of the cards and any subsequent changes in that order (Appendix 10). As previously mentioned, these photographs would act as an aide-memoire to facilitate in the transcription process.

The first set of cards was then placed to one side, and the second set was placed on the table in front of the participant. The participant was instructed that these cards provided a list of various aspects of an organisation, and that the focus of this section of the interview would be on considering the challenges in each area that affect the sustainability of their organisation. As with the first set of cards, the interviewee was asked to order the cards, this time 'in the way that best reflects how important they are to enabling the sustainability of your

organisation'. After being asked to reflect on why they chose a particular order, participants were asked to look at each card in turn and talk about the main challenges that they face in each area. Once the challenges had been discussed, two further questions, 'Has anything been done to overcome these challenges?' and 'How do you think things could be improved further?' were also asked, with the intention of identifying examples of best practices that may be useful for fulfilling objective four of the study. As with the first set of cards, the order of the cards and any subsequent changes were again photographed (Appendix 10).

Throughout the interview, a series of prompts and probes were used to encourage more in-depth answers from participants if necessary. These included questions such as 'Why have you ordered the cards in that way?', and 'Could you tell me more about that?', as well as questions designed to encourage participants into discussing areas of particular interest already identified in stage one of the research. Further prompts were also added each time a new area of interest was identified in an interview, so that it would be possible to consider this area with participants in subsequent interviews and ensure enough data was generated for an in-depth analysis to be possible.

At the end of each interview, participants were thanked for their involvement, and were also asked if there was anything that they might want to add that had not been covered by the interview. This was considered important as it is often acknowledged in the methodology literature that research interviewees can sometimes 'open up' and provide particularly valuable insights

once the initial interview has concluded (Bryman, 2012:487). Participants were also reminded that they would be given the opportunity to review the interview transcript to ensure its accuracy, and that they would be provided with a summary report of the research findings in recognition of their cooperation.

Immediately after each interview, the researcher would take a further 30 minutes to write an interview memo. This provided the opportunity to record any initial thoughts or observations which the researcher thought might be significant while they were still fresh in the mind. These memos were not only crucial to the subsequent interpretation and analysis of the data, but also provided the opportunity to evaluate and improve the interview schedule to ensure that the most useful data could be elicited in future interviews.

3.6.2.8 Analysing the interview data

All recorded interviews were first transcribed verbatim (King and Horrocks, 2010) and were subsequently double-checked by the researcher for accuracy and completeness (Appendix 11 provides an example transcript). The verbatim transcripts were then sent back to the participants via email for their review and approval so as to both increase the credibility of the study according to Lincoln and Guba's suggestions for ensuring research quality (see section 3.6.2.9), as well as to ensure that participants were still happy to consent to their data being used in the study.

All transcripts were then imported into NVivo for analysis. Having spent some time reading and re-reading the transcripts and adding annotations

regarding any emerging themes or interesting observations, a deductive and inductive thematic analysis was then employed on each transcript so as to enable ‘data reduction’ (Hennink et al, 2011).

Transcripts were initially coded deductively according to the themes used on the cards as well as according to whether ‘challenges’ or ‘best practices’ were being discussed. Since the cards had been used to guide the interview schedule, much of the data in the transcripts had already largely been arranged according to these themes and just needed to be coded in sections according to which card was being discussed. However, the semi-structured nature of the interviews meant that the interview schedule was not always followed through in a rigid format. Once sections that were easily attributable to each theme had been coded, it was therefore necessary to analyse the transcripts for references to the key themes that may have occurred elsewhere.

One further round of deductive coding was then employed to extract the data regarding the prioritisation of the themes that had occurred during the card ordering process. Following this, the extracted data was further analysed to produce a set of inductive codes that sought to provide a more in-depth analysis of the data related to each of the deductive codes. For example, in relation to the deductive code of ‘Challenges’ under the parent code of ‘Governance’, further inductive codes included ‘antiquated governance system’, ‘lack of continuity’, and ‘lack of involvement in the library’. In general, the majority of the inductive codes could be found to relate directly back to their respective deductive codes in this way. However, when necessary new codes such as

‘Relationships between concepts’ were established to represent new ideas that emerged from the data and could not be directly connected back to the deductive codes.

As with the first stage of data collection, the researcher initially focused on the data collected from the libraries in the UK, coding each in turn according to the process outlined above. Once completed, these codes were applied to the US transcripts, with any newly identified codes being recorded and the researcher returning to the previously examined transcripts from both the UK and US libraries to ensure that all relevant data had been recorded. This process was continued until the researcher felt that data saturation had been achieved.

Memos were also written on most codes with the purpose of recording any specific thoughts that could either connect different codes or provoke an initial understanding of the phenomenon under study (Faherty, 2009). These memos were particularly helpful in enabling the identification of any contrasts between the data collected from the libraries in the UK and USA.

Once the coding of the transcripts had been completed, the inductive codes were rearranged in a hierarchy to form broad categories and sub categories. In some cases, initial codes were dropped or combined into new codes, with the intent of finding ‘more selective and abstract ways of conceptualising the phenomena of interest’ (Bryman, 2012:569). This process gradually led to a hierarchical presentation of the data in relation to the

deductive codes and the two overall objectives associated with this stage of the research (Figure 3.4).

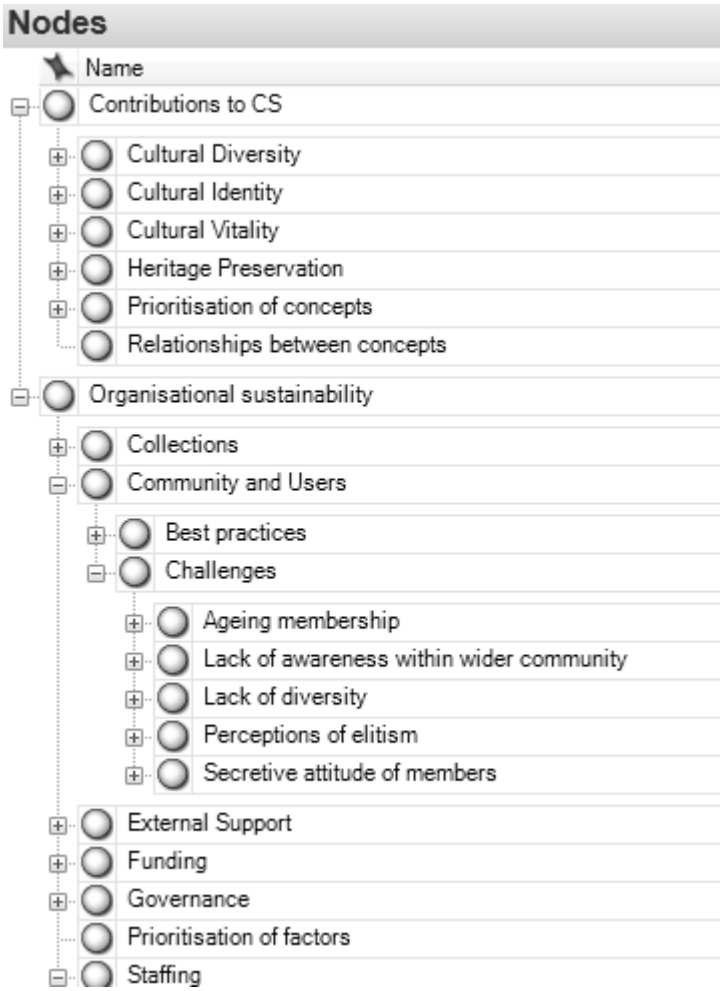

Figure 3.4 Example of the hierarchy of themes developed through the coding process employed on the interview data

3.7 Ensuring research quality

While the criteria for assessing research quality in quantitative research are well-established, there is far less consensus on how research quality should be assessed in qualitative research. Although there is general agreement that the

direct application of criteria such as reliability and validity as employed in quantitative research is unhelpful (Bryman, 2012), the extent to which the criteria applied to qualitative research should differ has caused much disagreement. For example, some writers argue for the assimilation of the criteria of reliability and validity as standards by which to determine the quality of research, with 'little change of meaning other than playing down the salience of measurement issues' (Bryman, 2012:389). Others meanwhile argue for the development of alternatives to reliability and validity, and the quality of qualitative research being assessed according to a wholly different set of criteria.

Falling into the latter category, Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in Bryman, 2012:390) advocate the use of alternative methods to assessing the quality of qualitative research. Based largely on their 'unease about the simple application of reliability and validity standards to qualitative research' owing to the fact that such 'criteria presuppose that a single absolute account of social reality is feasible', Lincoln and Guba's now widely used 'trustworthiness' criteria aim to provide standards by which to consider the quality of qualitative studies in a way that reflects the belief that there can be more than one valid account of social phenomena.

While acknowledging the existence of a number of adapted versions of reliability and validity (Kirk and Miller, 1986; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982; Mason, 1996, all cited in Bryman, 2012:389-390), as well as the existence of several other proposed schemes for alternative criteria for assessing the quality

of qualitative research (Gummesson, 2000; Spencer et al, 2003; Yardley, 2000, all cited in Bryman:2012:393-394), the researcher decided that the best course of action would be to follow Lincoln and Guba's suggestions. This decision was taken largely because of the prominence and therefore apparent endorsement of the use of their 'trustworthiness' criteria in the evaluation of qualitative research (Bryman, 2012), as well as the fact that the belief in multiple possible interpretations of social phenomena underlying the proposed criteria is closely aligned with the interpretivist philosophy adopted by the study.

The 'trustworthiness' scheme is divided into four key criteria, with recommendations being provided for ensuring each is met. The concept of 'Credibility' refers to how believable the findings are, while 'Transferability' relates to the extent to which the findings can be applied to other contexts. 'Dependability' is similar to the concept of reliability in qualitative research and concerns the degree to which the findings of the study can be repeated, while 'Confirmability' is related to the objectivity of the findings and ensuring that the 'personal values or theoretical inclinations' of the researcher do not 'manifestly…sway the conduct of the research and the findings deriving from it' (Bryman 2012:392-393).

While there have been a number of criticisms related to the practicalities of implementing all of the recommendations suggested by Lincoln and Guba for meeting each of the four criteria (Bryman, 2012), where possible, efforts were made by the researcher to apply their suggested strategies for improving the research quality. For example, to improve the credibility of the study, the

researcher employed the suggested techniques of respondent validation and the triangulation of data. Collecting data through document research and semi-structured interviews enabled the triangulation of data. Meanwhile, the opportunity to present aspects of the ongoing research to independent library professionals at the annual ILA and MLG conferences that occurred during the three years of the study, together with providing participants with copies of their interview transcripts and a final report on the research findings, enabled a certain amount of respondent validation of the data collected and the verification of the account developed by the researcher.

With qualitative research generally focusing on the 'contextual uniqueness and significance of the aspect of the social world being studied', the transferability of the findings of such research to other contexts is often considered problematic (Bryman, 2012:392). In their suggestions for achieving transferability, Lincoln and Guba instead propose that qualitative researchers seek to produce 'thick description', or 'rich accounts of the details' of the culture that they are studying so as to enable others to be able to make 'judgements about the possible transferability of findings' to other contexts (Bryman, 2012:392). With this in mind, the researcher endeavoured to provide as detailed account as possible in the research findings, along with an in-depth discussion of findings that may be transferable to other research contexts such as other MLAs.

Lastly, to maximise both the dependability and confirmability of the study, Lincoln and Guba recommend adopting an 'auditing' approach, whereby

detailed records are maintained at every stage of the research process which can then be scrutinised by the researcher's peers. This process can help to ensure the dependability of the research by using the peer review process to establish how far proper procedures have been followed and the 'the degree to which the theoretical inferences can be justified', as well as the confirmability of the study by having peers consider whether the researcher has 'overtly allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations manifestly to sway the conduct of the research and the findings deriving from it' (Bryman, 2012:392-393).

However, the time-consuming nature of this auditing process has meant that it has not become a pervasive approach to ensuring the quality of qualitative studies (Bryman, 2012). For the same reasoning, it would also have been difficult to apply in full to this particular study. In recognition of this, the researcher instead endeavoured to provide as detailed an account as possible of the research process within the confines of the thesis, and sought to regularly engage with the project's supervisory team over these issues to ensure that the procedures used and the objectivity of the findings were scrutinized as much as would be possible within the time limits of the research project. In addition, the researcher also strove to maintain a reflexive stance with regard to Lincoln and Guba's trustworthiness criteria throughout the research process to ensure that the research rigour and overall quality of the study could be maximised in all four of the key areas identified.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter will present the findings from the empirical research. Section 4.1 presents the data gathered from the ILG and MLG library websites, which seeks to profile the independent library sector and their cultural heritage assets. Section 4.2 will then present the data collected during the interview process and will report on the participants' perceptions of the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability, the challenges to achieving sustainability in independent libraries, and the best practices for overcoming these challenges. The chapter will then conclude by summarising the key themes identified in the data. Any noteworthy contrasts detected between the data collected from the UK's ILA libraries and the USA's MLG libraries will be highlighted over the course of the chapter, with a final summary of the similarities and differences between the libraries in each country again being presented at the end of the chapter.

4.1 Profile of the independent libraries and their cultural heritage assets

Unless otherwise referenced, the data in this section was gathered from the ILA and MLG Library websites. A list of their website addresses is provided in Appendix 12.

4.1.1 Historic origins and organisational traditions

The ILA was founded in 1989 by a group of twelve subscription libraries. The aim of the Association was to 'develop links between its constituent members by means of co-operative agreements, newsletters, social gatherings, seminars, workshops, and meetings' (ILA, 2018). Today, the ILA's membership has grown to 33 libraries. The majority of these were founded during the nineteenth century (Figure 4.1), and include fifteen subscription libraries, seven society libraries, five privately endowed public libraries, four mechanics' institutes, and two independent research libraries (Figure 4.2).

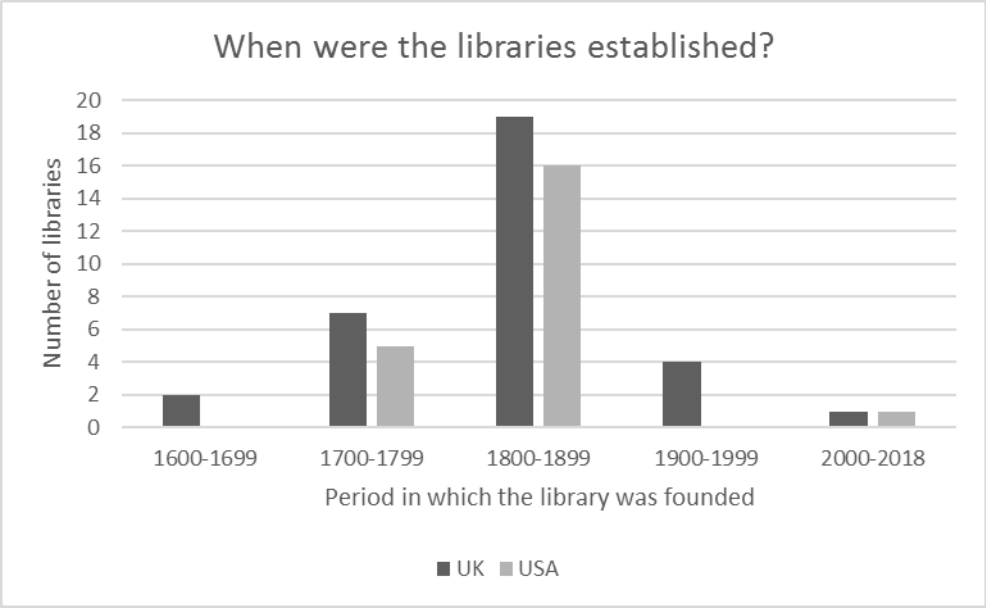

Figure 4.1. The dates that the libraries in the ILA and MLG were founded

In a similar manner to the ILA, the MLG was founded in 1991 by twelve libraries from across the United States. To be 'an active and voting member', an institution 'must be financially self-supporting, cannot be part of a larger

organisation, and must provide a circulating library to its members' (Wikipedia,2018). Libraries that only partially meet these criteria can become associate members. The current membership of the MLG stands at 22 institutions, with six of these receiving associate membership statuses. The majority of the MLG libraries were again founded in the nineteenth century (Figure 4.1), and include seventeen subscription libraries, four mechanics' institutes and one privately endowed public library (Figure 4.2).

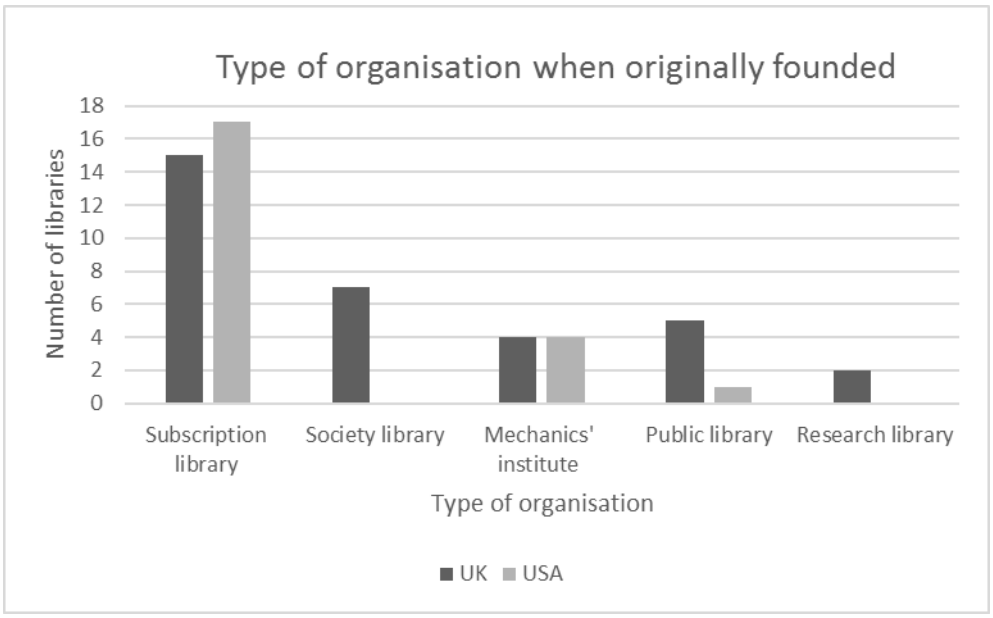

Figure 4.2. The types of organisations supported by the ILA and MLG

Although the ILA and MLG do support a small number of institutions that have more recent origins, both associations emphasise the historical nature of most of the libraries in their membership, suggesting that significant value is attached to their historic origins. For example, the MLG's *Wikipedia* entry highlights how each one of its full members have 'celebrated more than 100 years of existence, with four having survived for 250 years or more' (Wikipedia,

2018). Meanwhile, the ILA include a quotation from a *Financial Times* article, which describes independent libraries as 'havens of books, conversation and cultural events with histories stretching back centuries', at the top of its website's homepage (ILA, 2018). Of the libraries that have origins dating back to the early twentieth century or before, the majority prominently display information regarding their institution's history on their individual websites, with many referencing the founding date of their institution on their homepage or within their logo and branding. Examples include Bromley House Library, The Leeds Library, New York Society Library, and The Institute Library.

The majority of the libraries also have dedicated sections on their websites for providing in-depth accounts of their organisational history. For example, the Library Company of Philadelphia's website provides an account of its history as 'America's first successful lending library and oldest cultural institution', describing how it was founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1731 with '50 founding shareholders' who each 'contributed 40 shillings and agreed to pay ten shillings thereafter'. The Library of Innerpeffray's website similarly provides an in-depth description of its history from its foundation as 'the first public lending library in Scotland' in the 17th century through to the present day. This written description is further supported by an animated video entitled '335 years in 3 minutes – The Living Library'.

In addition to promoting awareness of their historic origins, many of the libraries also highlight what can be described as a the 'traditional subscription library experience' offered by their institution. This experience is often

summarised within the benefits of membership as including access to book collections that are primarily of the physical kind (as opposed to digital), a quiet space to read, think, and write, and the opportunity to be part of the library's cultural and intellectual community. For example, The London Library's list of membership benefits includes having access to 'More than one million books to browse, borrow and enjoy', 'A congenial place to work, relax or study', and the opportunity to be part of a community of 'authors, academics, students, researchers, and professionals' who 'share our facilities and their love of learning'.

The importance placed on this environment that independent libraries seek to maintain is perhaps best summarised on Folio: The Seattle Athenaeum's website. Although Folio was only founded in 2014, it is described as having been 'inspired by' the longstanding tradition of other independent libraries in America. Providing access to 'book collections and rooms for discussion and writing on important issues', its mission is presented as being to create 'an inviting, intimate home for "the community of the book"'. Since Folio does not share the historic roots of the other libraries in the MLG or ILA, this would suggest that the value placed on their historic nature goes beyond a sense of pride regarding the individual history and the resilience of their organisations, to include a sense that they play a vital role in upholding broader subscription library traditions. Furthermore, it is suggested that these traditions are not simply being preserved for posterity as an example of past customs but

are believed to continue to play an active role in supporting the broader cultural life of their communities.

4.1.2 Book collections

25 of the libraries in the ILA and 16 of the libraries in the MLG provide information on their websites regarding the size of their book collections (Figure 4.3). While not complete, this data can provide a general guide on the combined scale of the collections maintained by the libraries in each association. Indeed, with the number of volumes in the 25 ILA libraries totalling 2,452,500 and the number of volumes in the 16 MLG libraries totalling 2,431,000, this would suggest a total number of volumes far in excess of these figures should the data have been available for all 33 of the ILA libraries and all 22 of the MLG libraries.

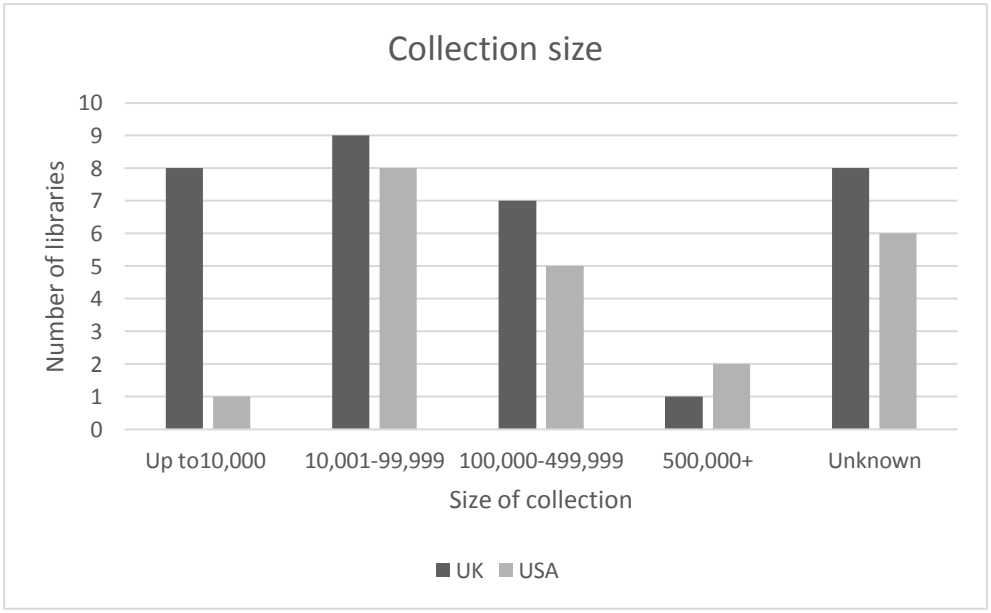

Figure 4.3: Size of the book collections maintained by the ILA and MLG libraries

From this data it is also clear that the sizes of the individual collections in each of the libraries can vary significantly, from a few thousand to over a million volumes. For example, having less than 1,000 volumes, the Tavistock Subscription Library's collection is the smallest of those in the ILA that provide this data, while the London Library's collection, which stands at more than 1,040,000 volumes, is by far the largest. Meanwhile, with 9,000 volumes the St Johnsbury Athenaeum has the smallest collection of the MLG libraries that provide this data, while the Boston Athenaeum has the largest at more than 600,000 volumes.

Despite their varying sizes, analysis of collection descriptions on each of the library's websites reveal a series of shared strengths that can be detected across most of the collections held by the ILA and MLG Libraries. These can be categorised according to the following four themes:

Local history and culture

Many of the libraries have collections of books relating to the local area that have been built up over their institution's history. These reflect the development of the local community over the centuries and provide invaluable insights into local identity. Many of the works included within these collections were written by local authors and would often have been produced in small numbers, making them difficult to locate elsewhere. In consequence, whilst some of the libraries' collections may be relatively small, their value in terms of the regional heritage that they contain is considered of great significance. Indeed, while it may have

one of the smallest collections in the ILA's membership, The Tavistock Subscription Library holds works relating to local 'industry', 'archaeology', 'natural history', 'myths', 'legends', and 'poetry'. Similarly, the Redwood Library and Athenaeum's collection is described as focusing mainly on the local area, having 'most concentration on Newport, Aquidneck Island, Rhode Island and New England, radiating with less concentration geographically towards other U.S. environs'. These collections are described as invaluable resources for both local history enthusiasts and academics researching the history and culture of particular regions.

Rare books and collections of a specialist interest

With many of the libraries holding pre-eighteenth century items, a number of rare books can be found within their collections. Innerpeffray Library in Scotland holds numerous items relating to Scottish history that includes incunabula dating back to the 15th century, while Chetham's Library holds items such as the first printed atlas of England and Wales from 1579, and a first edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost* from 1667. Examples from the U.S include the Providence Athenaeum's collection of rare first editions by authors such as Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, and Louisa May Alcott, as well as an original hand-coloured edition of Audubon's *Birds of America* which is held at the Minneapolis Athenaeum.

Other collections may not be as notable for the rarity or age of the books that they maintain, however, their specialist focus can provide a unique insight

into specific subjects that is unavailable elsewhere. Examples in the UK include the collections at the Working-Class Movement Library, which focuses specifically on collecting items ‘relating to the development of the political and cultural institutions of the working class’ since the industrial revolution, and the Sybil Campbell Collection, which focuses on assembling material related to the professional and educational development of women in the first half of the 20th century.

In the U.S, the collections at the St. Louis Mercantile Library ‘concentrate on Western expansion and the history, development and growth of the St. Louis region and of the American rail and river transportation experiences’ and is ‘distinguished as one of the largest’ collections in the country related to American railroad, river and inland waterways history. The Athenaeum of Philadelphia meanwhile focuses on collecting material related to ‘the history and antiquities of America, and the useful arts’ and is considered to be particularly strong in American architecture and interior design history.

Collections related to notable figures

A number of the library’s collections have connections to notable figures and can provide insights into their lives and interests for researchers. Institutions such as Gladstone’s Library, which began life when the 19th century British Prime Minister William Gladstone donated his own personal collection to the public, includes many heavily annotated volumes that can be consulted by researchers interested in his life and career. Similar research opportunities are

available in other ILA institutions such as The Langholm Library, which maintains the collection of the Scottish writer and politician, Hugh MacDiarmid, and the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, which holds the collections of the 19th century naturalists Christopher Edmund Broome and Leonard Jenyns.

Connections to notable figures also exist in the collections held at the MLG libraries. Having been founded by Benjamin Franklin, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Library Company of Philadelphia holds his personal collection. The Boston Athenaeum meanwhile holds portions of the personal libraries of religious and political figures such as Cardinal Cheverus, Henry Knox, and George Washington, while the Salem Athenaeum in Massachusetts holds the collection of the eighteenth-century educator and physician, Edward Augustus Holyoke.

Collections as a resource for social history

As many of the libraries maintain original collections that were built up over the course of their existence, they can also act as a valuable resource for social history by providing insights into the interests and reading habits of their members over the centuries. The Portico Library's collection developed over the course of the nineteenth century, from when the library first opened in 1806 to when it stopped regularly adding to its collection in the early twentieth century. Its large sections on subjects such as voyages and travels, topography, and church history signify that these were particularly popular areas of interest with

the membership. Its collection of fiction titles, which includes now obscure authors such as Charles James Lever and Henry Cockton, provides a different perspective on popular nineteenth century literature that goes beyond canonized authors such as Charles Dickens and Jane Austen. Meanwhile, its section of 'Polite Literature', which includes subjects ranging from the sciences to the occult, helps to develop understanding of cultural interests during the Georgian and Victorian eras.

This strength is also identified in the collections of a number of the MLG libraries. For example, the New York Society Library's collection, which includes 'nearly 300,000 volumes' of 'fiction and literature, biography, history, social sciences, the arts, and travel', is said to 'reflect the reading interests of its members over the last 260 years'. Meanwhile, the Portsmouth Athenaeum in New Hampshire's collection is similarly said to reflect 'the broad range of interests of educated nineteenth century Portsmouth citizens, including science and technology, history and exploration, theology, biography, navigation and maritime history, law, and arts and architecture'.

While it is possible to conclude that the strengths identified above would have little interest beyond a niche membership that the libraries may attract, efforts to increase accessibility to the collections would appear to highlight the extent of the perceived cultural significance that is attached to them. For example, despite access to the collections often being promoted as a benefit of membership, 24 of the libraries in the ILA and 15 of the libraries in the MLG now

offer either access for researchers or full public access to their collections (Figure 4.4).

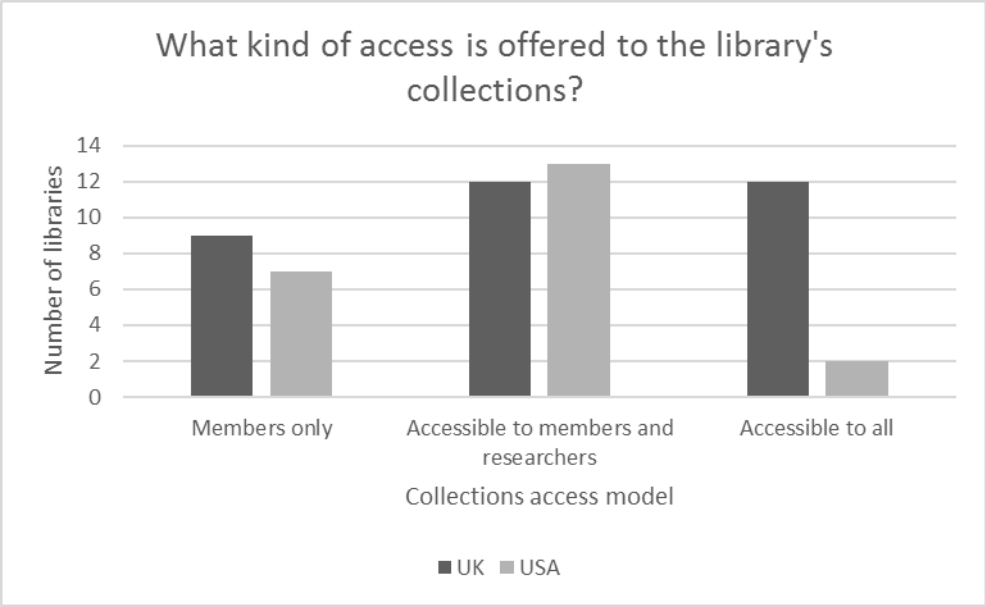

Figure 4.4. Access to the collections held by the ILA and MLG libraries

The development of online catalogues by many of the libraries would also appear to suggest a general movement towards increasing accessibility to the collections, with 21 of the ILA libraries and 18 of the MLG libraries now having a full online catalogue or being in the process of developing one (Figure 4.5).

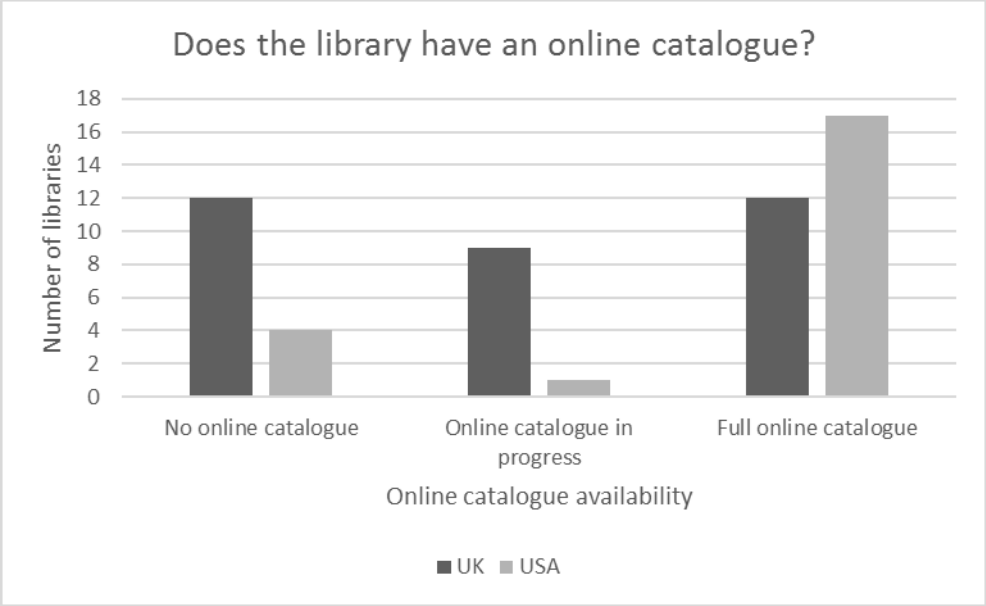

Figure 4.5. Online catalogue availability at the ILA and MLG libraries

Lastly, it is also important to note that alongside their historic collections, many of the libraries also offer their members access to a modern lending library (Figure 4.6). This would seem to be more common in the US than in the UK, with only 9 (27%) of the 33 ILA libraries offering this service in comparison to 16 (72%) of the 22 MLG libraries.

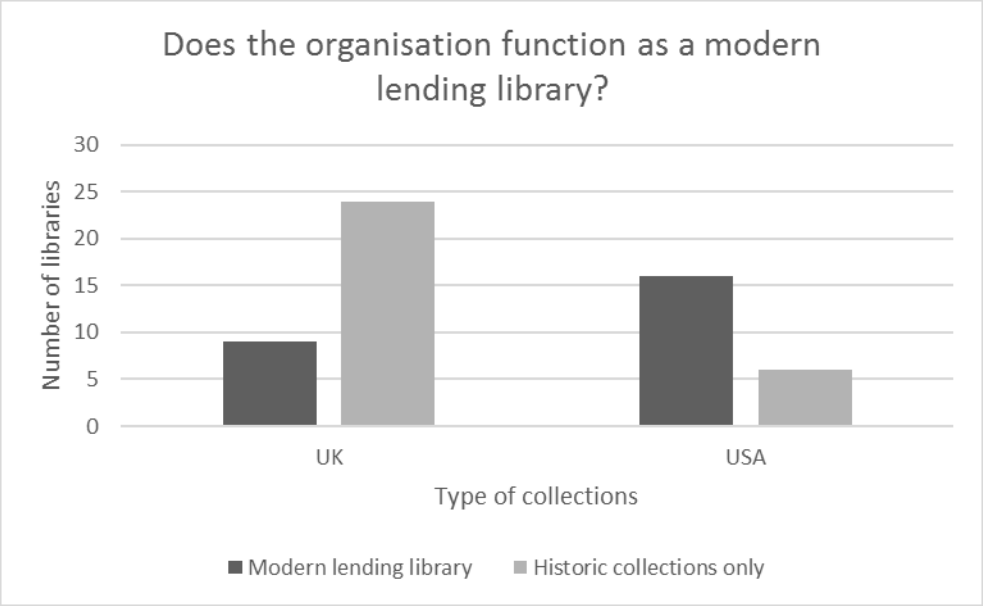

Figure 4.6. Type of collections held at the ILA and MLG libraries

However, it is likely that this discrepancy between the ILA and MLG libraries exists because membership of the MLG is limited to libraries that specifically 'provide a circulating library to its members' (Wikipedia, 2018), while the membership rules of the ILA do not specifically require the organisation to have circulating collections but simply to have the 'provision of' any kind of 'library' as 'a key part of their activity' (ILA, 2018).

4.1.3 Additional collections

The collections maintained by these libraries are not just limited to books. Many hold significant artefacts, including paintings, sculptures, and antiques (Figure 4.7). Some also maintain more unexpected items, such as the collection of fossils held at the Bath Literary and Scientific Institution in the UK and the collection of locks held at the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen of

New York in the U.S, which ‘represents one of the most complete anthologies of bank and vault locks in the world, with more than 370 locks, keys and tools dating from 4000 BC to the modern 20th-century’.

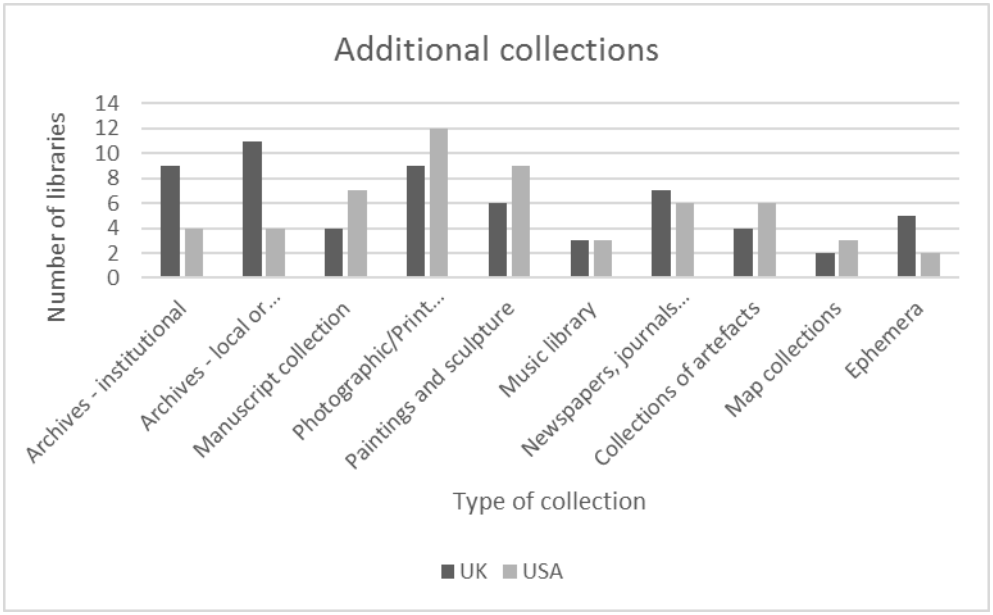

Figure 4.7. Additional collections held by the ILA and MLG libraries

Having provided their membership with access to the latest news sources over the centuries, many also preserve long runs of newspapers, journals, and periodicals, as well as collections of ephemera that document everyday life. In the UK, Chetham’s Library in Manchester holds a number of albums and scrapbooks of locally printed material, including theatre programmes and political pamphlets that date back to the 18th century. A large collection of civil war ephemera meanwhile resides at the Library Company of Philadelphia in the U.S, being made up of over 50,000 items that includes ‘recruiting posters…newspapers, political broadsides and leaflets, tickets, trade cards, cartoons…ribbons, and buttons’.

Institutional archives maintain detailed accounts of the history of these libraries. These can include minutes from committee meetings that can date back to the institution's inception and records of book loans that can provide an account of the interests of the library's membership. These are again a valuable resource for social history research and can provide insight into the lives of any notable figures connected to these institutions over the course of their existence. For example, The Portico Library's website describes how the institution has supported research into the lives of the atomic theorist John Dalton and the 19th century novelist, Elizabeth Gaskell, both of whom used the library's collections. Meanwhile, the New York Society Library's 'City Readers' project has involved digitizing over '100,000 records of books, readers, and borrowing history' from the library and making them publicly accessible online. Having 'served 42 members of the first nine American Congresses', these records are described as being capable of shedding 'new light on the interests of the men who shaped the nation'. It's '57 Female Readers' project also provides insight into the interests of this 'small but active slice of the Library's' original membership.

The archives of local figures, organisations, and societies also often end up preserved by these libraries. The Morrab Library, which is located in the town of Penzance in the South West of England, maintains a large photographic archive related to the region. The archive includes several donated collections that are said to 'capture images of everyday life' in the area from the mid nineteenth century through to the 1970s. Meanwhile, the Armitt Library in

Cumbria holds archives related to notable local figures, including Beatrix Potter and John Ruskin.

Like the Morrab Library, the Portsmouth Athenaeum in New Hampshire 'contains nearly 28,000 historic images that date from the 1850s through today', which are said to tell the 'story of Portsmouth and its environs, people, and culture'. The Athenaeum Music and Arts Library in La Jolla, San Diego holds a collection of over 2000 artists' books, many of which have been donated to the library and represent the work of 'regional artists and presses'. The St Johnsbury Athenaeum in Vermont meanwhile archives 'materials that document the history of St. Johnsbury', including 'records of local clubs and individuals, photographs, general research materials, and institutional records', and works in partnership with four other local institutions 'to develop a strategy for preserving St. Johnsbury's heritage'.

4.1.4 Buildings

As well as promoting the work that they do in preserving collections of books and artefacts, many of the libraries also highlight their historic buildings. The preservation of these buildings is described as forming an important part of their organisations' missions, especially as 79% of the libraries in the UK and 77% of the libraries in the US have premises listed as being of some level of historic significance according to the systems used in each country (Figures 4.8 and 4.9).

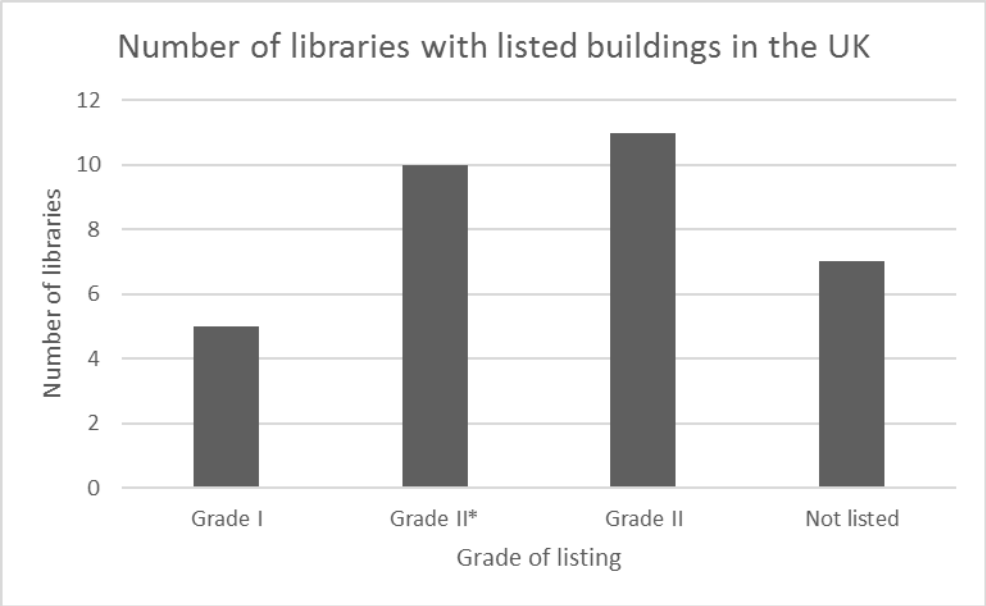

Figure 4.8. Number of ILA libraries with listed buildings (N.B. for simplicity, organisations listed according to the systems used in Scotland and Northern Ireland have been recorded according to the nearest equivalent listing used in the rest of the UK]

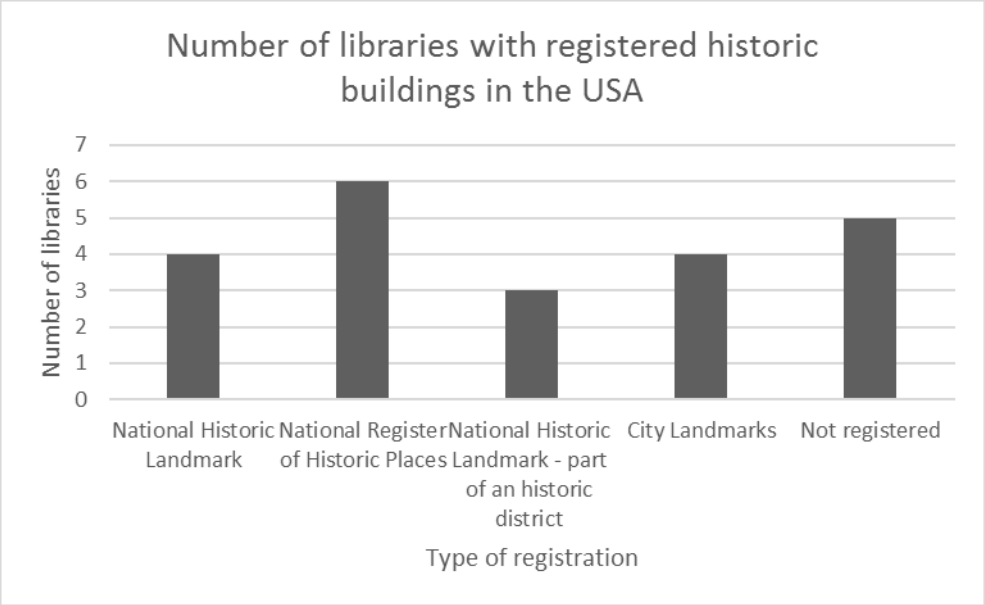

Figure 4.9. Number of MLG libraries with buildings registered as being of historic significance

In the UK, 79% of the library buildings are pre-twentieth century, with the majority dating from the 19th century (Figure 4.10). A number of institutions also exist in buildings from earlier periods either due to having been founded much earlier or because they chose to occupy premises that were already in existence. Examples include Chetham's Library, which is set within a 15th Century baronial hall, and Tavistock Subscription Library, which resides within an abbey gatehouse that dates from the 12th Century.

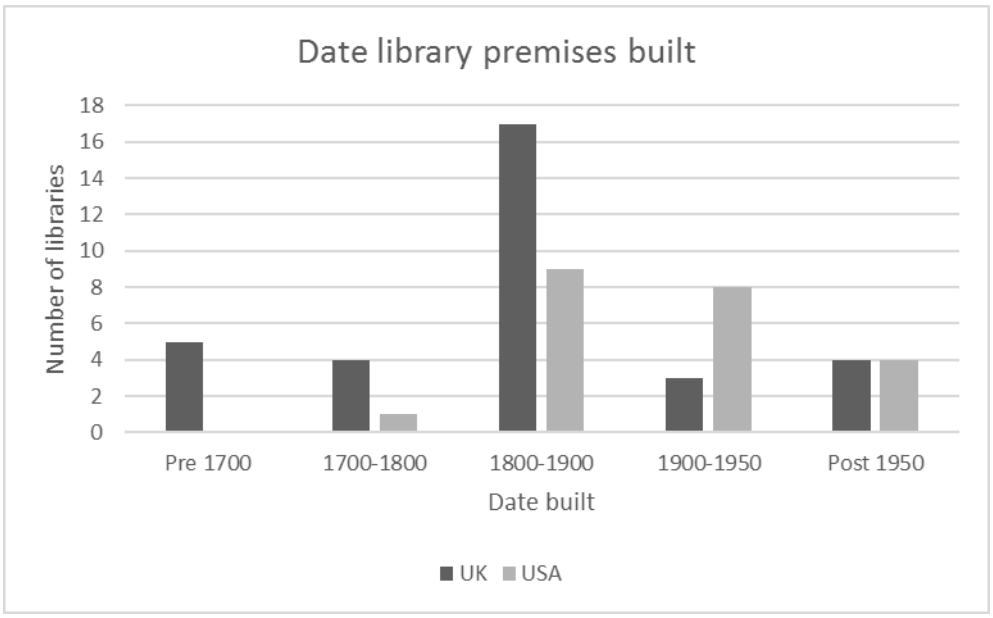

Figure 4.10. Periods from which the ILA and MLG library buildings date

As 85% of the libraries in the UK were founded before the twentieth century (Figure 4.1), this would suggest that the majority still exist within their original premises, or at least premises that have been occupied for a considerable period of the organisation's existence. This would however not appear to be the case in the US, with only 45% of the libraries residing in buildings that date back to before the twentieth century (Figure 4.10) despite

95% of the institutions having been founded in the nineteenth century or earlier (Figure 4.1). Further examination of the MLG library websites revealed that part of the reason for this would appear to be because there was a trend during the first half of the twentieth century for the libraries to move to larger, often purpose-built premises. Indeed, eight of the 21 MLG libraries with pre-twentieth century origins describe how their institutions made this move (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. MLG libraries that moved to new premises between 1900-1950

Name of library	Date founded	Date moved to current premises
The Charleston Library Society	1748	1914
The Lanier Library	1890	1905
San Francisco Mechanics' Institute	1854	1909
The Mercantile Library, New York	1820	1932
The Mercantile Library, Cincinnati	1835	1932
The New York Society Library	1754	1937
The Salem Athenaeum	1810	1907
The Timrod Literary and Library Association	1897	1915

To a lesser extent, this trend has continued into more recent years. Two notable examples are the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Mercantile Library in New York. Since its inception in 1731 the Library Company of

Philadelphia has moved premises six times, either taking on or building new, larger premises during times of expansion or taking on smaller premises during times of financial hardship. Its current premises were purpose built in 1965 and coincided with a programme of redevelopment which sought to establish the library's reputation as an 'independent research library concentrating on American society and culture from the 17th through to the 19th centuries'.

Meanwhile, the Mercantile Library is currently undergoing a similar process of transformation, which includes a move to new premises. Having been founded as a membership library in 1820, in 2005 the decision was made to rename the organisation as The Mercantile Library Center for Fiction and to refocus the mission of the institution from providing traditional library services for readers to promoting fiction and supporting writers. With the long-term aim being to establish its reputation as the 'only organization in the United States devoted solely to the vital art of fiction', over the course of this research project it has since been renamed again as the 'Center for Fiction'. In October 2018, it will leave its historic Manhattan premises that it has occupied since 1932 to move to a new purpose-built building in Brooklyn.

Nevertheless, despite the majority of the MLG libraries no longer existing in their original buildings, as seen in Figure 4.9, 77% do still have premises that are registered as being of historic significance. Alongside the traditional membership library services described in section 4.1.1, for most of the MLG libraries these buildings continue to be described as an integral part of their cultural offer. For example, having been built in 1912, the New York Society

Library's premises may not directly compare to the medieval grade one listed building maintained by Cheetham's Library in the UK. However, considerable effort is made to provide historical information on the building and to highlight its 'handsome Italianate town house' features, as well as the fact that it is a 'New York City Landmark'.

Meanwhile, the San Francisco Mechanics' Institute describes its 1909 building as having been built in the beaux-arts architectural style by 'one of the most distinguished' of the city's architects, Albert Pissis. A particularly detailed account of its construction is provided, including the origins of the materials used such as the 'metal framing cast in California', the 'white Manti sandstone from Utah' and the 'Tennessee pink marble'. The level of description provided would again appear to suggest that despite these libraries not possessing their original premises, significant value is still attached to their buildings and they continue to be considered an integral part of the libraries' cultural offer.

4.1.5 Activities

The cultural contributions of these institutions can also be seen to involve far more than the preservation of cultural artefacts. Indeed, 31 of the 33 libraries in the ILA and all 22 of the libraries in the MLG also provide a range of additional activities. These can include activities with a cultural, social, or educational focus (Figure 4.11). For example, in terms of cultural activities, 26 of the libraries in the ILA and 20 of the libraries in the MLG provide programmes of cultural events, which commonly include events such as book readings,

lectures, and concerts. Ten of the ILA libraries and ten of the MLG libraries also hold exhibitions, which can either be based upon material in their own collections or the work of local artists.

Regarding social activities, a number of the libraries run events such as coffee mornings or annual dinners for their members or provide a meeting space for local societies. These can include special interest groups such as reading or writing groups, or local history or film societies. Educational activities provided by the libraries can range from formal courses to study languages, history, or creative writing, to more informal workshops that can focus on anything from learning traditional crafts to improving everyday IT skills.

In some of the libraries, this educational focus has developed to include the offer of grants or fellowships to students using their collections for research purposes. For example, Chawton House Library in the UK offers visiting fellowships in partnership with the University of Southampton for students who wish to use its collections, which primarily focus on the history of women's writing. Meanwhile, the Library Company of Philadelphia in the US offers a series of fellowships that support research in a variety of fields related to their collection's strengths in 'the history of America and the Atlantic world in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries'.

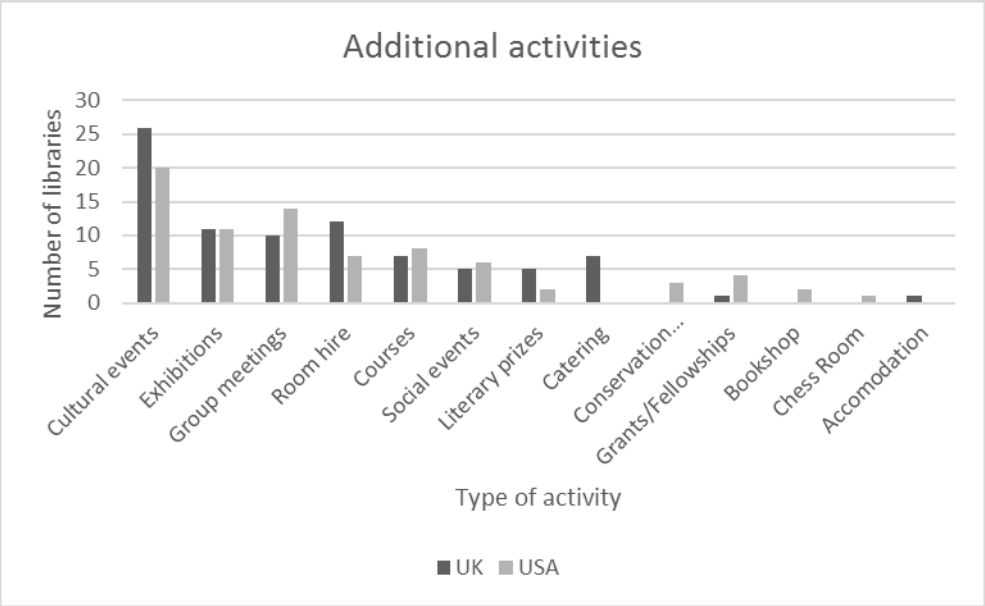

Figure 4.11. Additional activities provided by the libraries in the ILA and MLG

A more recent analysis of the events listed on the individual library's websites over a two-month period can provide further elucidation of the libraries' contributions to the cultural vitality of their communities. Table 4.2 provides a summary of some of the events posted by three ILA libraries and three MLG libraries from the 1st of May to the 30th of June 2018.

Table 4.2. Examples of events hosted by ILA and MLG libraries during May 2018

Examples of events in ILA libraries:	***Examples of events in MLG libraries:***
<u>The Bishopsgate Institute, London</u> ***The Pink Jukebox***: 'A Ballroom and Latin dance club for members of the LGBT community and their friends' ***Histories from inside the City's Victorian Asylum***: a talk exploring the stories of the 'working class men and women who were admitted to the City of London asylum' including 'the ethnic diversity of the patients and their experiences of life in the city.'	**<u>The Mechanics' Institute, San Francisco, CA</u>** ***Chess Class for Beginners and Intermediate Players:*** a bi-monthly chess class held in the library's dedicated chess room, which is home to 'the oldest chess club in the country' ***SAVE IT! How to collect and organize family and community life stories***: 'a one-

Protest on Camera: a talk on the 'the history of protest on the streets of London from the second half of the twentieth century to today, and its documentation by photographers.'	day workshop on using oral history to preserve family and community history' ***Pictures of a Gone City: Tech and the Dark Side of Prosperity in the San Francisco Bay Area:*** Author Richard A. Walker discusses his book which 'examines San Francisco's exploding inequality'
The Portico Library, Manchester ***In So Many Words*: Roget's Thesaurus and the Power of Language** (exhibition): contemporary artists present 'new pieces created through research into the legacy and influence of The Portico Library's first Secretary, Peter Mark Roget.' ***Fat Out: Matana Roberts and Kelly Jayne Jones****:* in collaboration with Manchester live music promoter Fat Out, a performance between 'internationally renowned US composer' Matana Roberts and 'British sound artist/improviser Kelly Jayne Jones' ***Peterloo from the Portico*:** a guided walk of the nearby site of the Peterloo Massacre by Manchester Tour Guide and Portico Library Member, Ed Glinert	**The Mercantile Library, Cincinnati, OH** ***Yoga in the Reading Room:*** twice-weekly yoga classes held in the library's historic reading room ***Cincinnati Poet Laureate Reception:*** a celebration of 'Cincinnati's new Poet Laureate, Manuel Iris ***Harriet Beecher Stowe Freedom Writer Award and Lecture:*** with the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Underground Railroad*, Colson Whitehead
The Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society ***Newcastle University Violins*:** Free violin concert in partnership with Newcastle University ***The Marvellous Life of Learie Constantine:*** launch of Harry Pearson's biography of the cricketer Learie Constantine, which includes insights into his life in the 'working-class world of the industrial North' ***Newcastle Noir:*** an annual literary festival **'**celebrating the best in contemporary crime writing' and bringing together writers from the North East, across Britain, as well as from further afield.'	**The Boston Athenaeum, MA** ***Biotechnology and its Impact on the Future of Greater Boston:*** a panel discussion exploring 'the latest trends in gene therapy, gene editing, and RNA interference' ***Art and Architecture Tour:*** a monthly tour of the Athenaeum focusing on 'the history of the Athenaeum, its iconic building and its special collections'. ***Boston Lyric Opera: Trouble in Tahiti:*** Discussion of Leonard Bernstein's work with musicologist and conductor Nicholas Alexander Brown, with performances from the Boston Lyric Opera

As well as demonstrating the diversity of the events on offer in both the ILA and MLG libraries, these examples also highlight a number of similarities between the kinds of events which tend to be provided by independent libraries. For example, as well as promoting aspects of their libraries' history (*In So Many Words; Art and Architecture tour*), many of their events also tend to focus on the heritage of the wider local area (*Histories from Inside the City's Victorian Asylum; Protest on Camera; Peterloo from the Portico*). Many also play a part in discussing current social issues within the context of the local area (*Pictures of a Gone City; Biotechnology and its Impact on the Future of Greater Boston*) or promote the work of contemporary local artists (*Cincinnati Poet Laureate Reception; Newcastle University Violins; Boston Lyric Opera).* Collaborations with other local organisations also appear to be common (*Fat Out; Newcastle University Violins; Boston Lyric Opera*), as does the use of the libraries as a space to host artists from further afield for the benefit of the local community (*Fat Out; Harriet Beecher Stowe Freedom Writer Award and Lecture; The Marvellous Life of Learie Constantine; Newcastle Noir).*

Lastly, it is important to note that these activities are not just restricted to library members. Despite many of the libraries originally having been intended for the benefit of a paying membership, all of the libraries in the USA and 27 of the 33 libraries in the UK now offer at least partial public access if not full public access to their institutions (Figure 4.12). Partial public access generally consists of access for tours of the library or access for exhibitions and events being

offered to members of the public, with open access to the collections and to certain areas of the library being restricted to members.

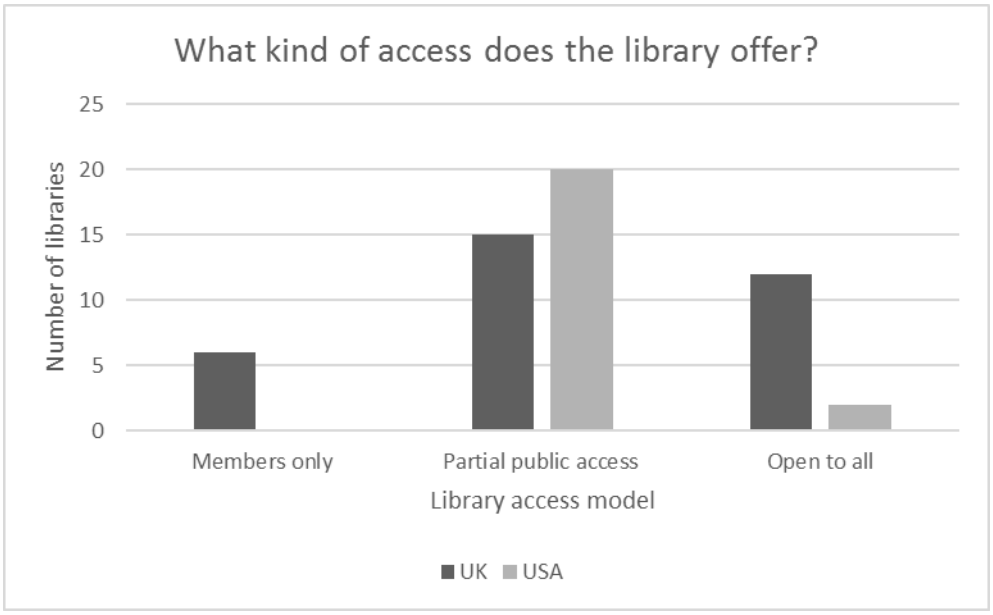

Figure 4.12. Access provided to the ILA and MLG libraries

Of those that offer full public access, some have always operated according to this model (Chetham's Library, Innerpeffray Library, Gladstone's Library, Thomas Plume's Library, the Working-Class Movement Library, the Sybil Campbell Collection and Chawton House Library in the UK; the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum in the USA). The rest have become publicly accessible after a change in status from being a membership library to become either a research library (Langholm Library, Saffron Walden Town Library, the Bishopsgate Institute in the UK; the Minneapolis Athenaeum in the USA) or part of a community museum (Whitby Museum Library & Archive and the Armitt Museum and Library in UK).

The higher number of such institutions in the ILA may be because their membership is open to any kind of independent library and is not specifically restricted to membership or subscription libraries as the MLG is. Indeed, the publicly accessible libraries in the MLG are classed as associate members rather than full members of the association. However, overall these figures would appear to reflect a move towards greater public access and, along with the diverse range of activities provided by the institutions (Figure 4.11), a growing commitment from both the ILA and MLG libraries to engaging with their communities more widely.

4.2 Interviews with professionals working in independent libraries in the ILA AND MLG

4.2.1 Perceived contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability

As discussed in chapter three, interviewees were first asked to consider the contributions of their organisations to cultural sustainability according to the categories developed from the previous literature. These categories included Heritage Preservation, Cultural Vitality, Cultural Identity, and Cultural Diversity. Figure 4.13 provides a recap of the definitions of these categories as presented to the participants on the cards used in the interviews.

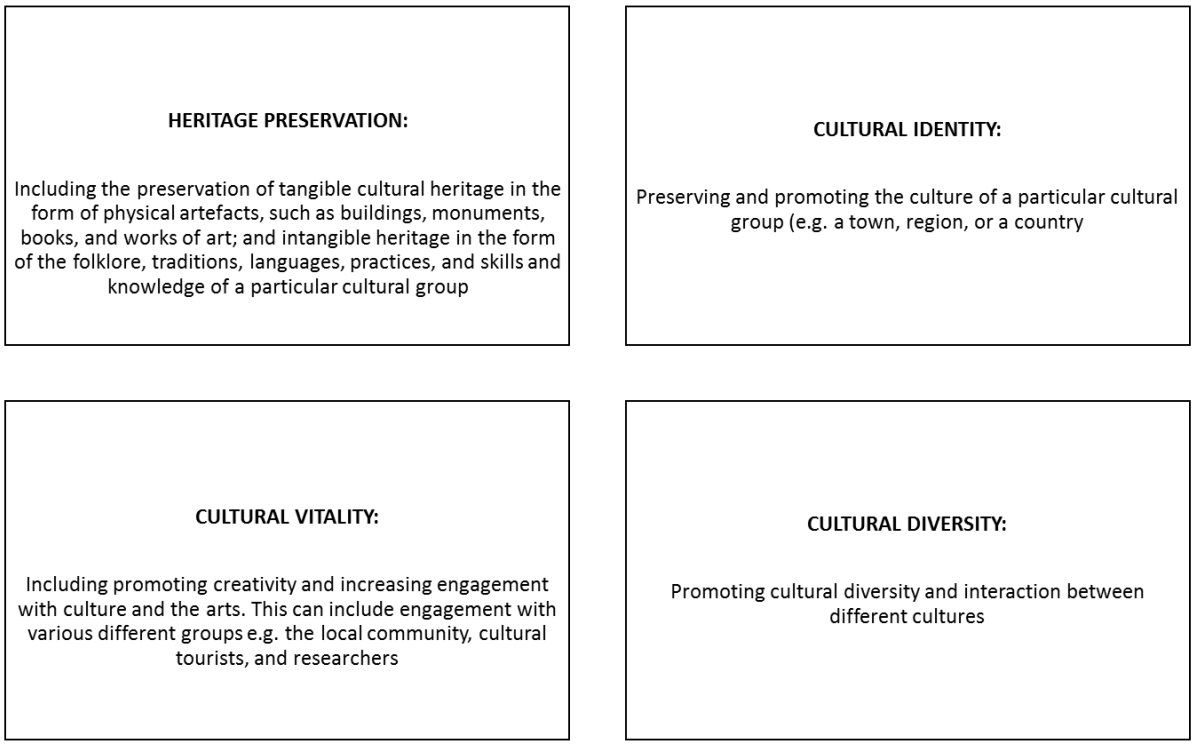

Figure 4.13 Categories of potential contributions to cultural sustainability as depicted on the cards presented to the interviewees

Participants were initially invited to order the categories according to the areas by which they perceived their organisation provided the strongest contributions (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Areas considered by interviewees to represent their organisation's strongest contributions to cultural sustainability

Strongest contributions	ILA Libraries	MLG Libraries
Heritage Preservation	13	5
Cultural Vitality	4	1
Cultural Identity	2	1
Cultural Diversity	0	0

Further consideration of each of the categories revealed a number of common beliefs regarding the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability. These are outlined below.

4.2.1.1 Heritage Preservation

The data collected would appear to suggest that Heritage Preservation is generally considered a key strength in the majority of the ILA and MLG libraries, with 13 of the 19 interviewees from the ILA libraries and five of the seven interviewees from the MLG libraries choosing Heritage Preservation as the most important contribution of their organisation to cultural sustainability.

In general, the interviewees who did not consider Heritage Preservation to be one of their organisation's most important contributions came from the small number of independent libraries that do not maintain historic buildings or collections. For example, UK8, who chose Cultural Vitality as their strongest

contribution, described how Heritage Preservation wasn't a priority for their organisation as the library's collection hadn't 'retained anything much of its original stock' and their building had 'changed a lot' and wasn't 'listed'. USA6, who also chose Cultural Vitality as their strongest contribution, similarly described how Heritage Preservation was not much of a priority due to the fact that their original collection and building had been 'entirely lost' when the library had burned down in the early twentieth century.

Of the interviewees who considered Heritage Preservation to be their strongest contribution, the preservation of the library's tangible heritage was often considered fundamental to the organisation's existence. For example, one interviewee described how the preservation of their library's building and collection was 'almost…a prerequisite' to 'all the other stuff that we do', suggesting that they 'wouldn't have' the organisation if they 'didn't have' such an 'amazing building' and 'amazing books' (UK16). Another participant meanwhile highlighted how their work in preserving the library's tangible heritage held greater significance than a simple 'duty to look after' historical objects, as without physical objects such as the building and collections there 'just wouldn't be any point' to their organisation's existence (UK1).

While most of the interviewees appear to agree on the importance of Heritage Preservation, some participants also acknowledged a more complex relationship between the four categories. On further examination of the cards, interviewee UK16 highlighted how the work that their organisation did with regards to Heritage Preservation is at the core of any of the work that they may

carry out in the three other areas (n.b. participants gestures to particular cards are presented in square brackets):

> ‘if we don't have it [*Heritage Preservation*], it's almost that we can't do the other bits [*Cultural Vitality/Cultural Identity/Cultural Diversity*]. So it's co-dependant on having this situation [*Heritage Preservation*], this area, these books, but if we take that out of it, then we don't do these other bits [*Cultural Vitality/Cultural Identity/Cultural Diversity*].’

4.2.1.2 Cultural Vitality

Interviewee UK6 noted a more two-way relationship between Heritage Preservation and Cultural Vitality. Commenting that the two areas ‘speak to each other’, the interviewee proceeded to explain that while the work that their organisation does to promote Cultural Vitality through ‘literary festivals and other events’ is ‘derivative’ of the collection that they preserve, it is also what ‘funds’ the preservation of this heritage. A number of participants also commented on how increasing their work in the area of promoting Cultural Vitality had been crucial to ensuring their organisation’s survival after what was described as a long period of stagnation in the late twentieth century. UK13 commented how their organisation ‘had a bit of a lull in the sixties, seventies, eighties, probably the nineties as well’, with ‘membership falling’ and the organisation not being ‘particularly outward looking’ and only having ‘about six lectures a year’. Work to expand its cultural programme to what currently includes ‘over 200 events a

year' was attributed as having been 'instrumental in the development of the library in the last 15 to 20 years'.

Similarly, USA6 described how 'post World War II' their organisation had experienced a 'lull in activities' and it was only since 'about the year 2000' that they had started 'hosting literary events' and 'really start[ed] focusing on how' they 'could grow' their 'community'. A more recent expansion in their events programme to include a 'schedule of activities' that would 'appeal to a variety of groups of people' beyond the 'literary people' who would usually be associated with library membership was also described as being crucial to ensuring the library's continued relevance for 'the entire community'.

However, while such work to promote Cultural Vitality was considered to have important benefits to the sustainability of the organisations and their ability to continue carrying out work in the area of Heritage Preservation, some participants also noted a certain degree of tension between the activities carried out in each area. UK5 described how 'As well as being a library by name', their organisation 'is also a museum', and while the 'building itself' as well as 'the furniture, paintings, and other artefacts…all form an important part of [its] collections', they are 'still used by readers and visitors' today. This was therefore considered to cause 'a tension between the increase in use that is needed to take part in this [*Cultural Vitality*] while also carrying out the conservation work necessary for this [*Heritage Preservation*]'.

Other interviewees suggested that this issue went beyond a tension between the use and preservation of tangible heritage to also include a tension between the preservation of the more intangible aspects of their heritage, such as the organisation's traditions as a subscription library, and the development and diversification of their cultural offer. For example, UK7 described how their work in Cultural Vitality 'is quite topical…right now', as having recently 'been given a certain amount of money' for 'development' there had been a lot of debate between members of the governing committees 'over what the institution is for'. While some were 'very keen to expand and move onwards', the interviewee described how there was also a 'quite vocal group which doesn't want anything to change' and didn't 'seem bothered' that this might mean that the institution 'will die if they don't find ways to encourage more people in'.

UK4 similarly reported how some of their 'older volunteers' who had 'been there for a long time' didn't 'quite agree on the way' that the institution was 'going as a library' despite the fact that increasing the variety of activities on offer to appeal to people who may have 'different ideas' and no direct 'interest in the books themselves' was crucial for 'trying to keep the place going'. Meanwhile, USA5 described how while there was growing awareness of the need to take their institution 'beyond this notion of the subscription library' to 'start to engage with the community and bring more people in', there had also been pressure from some of the library's membership who were 'horrified by the idea' as they didn't 'want people to know about their secret club'.

4.2.1.3 Cultural Identity

The importance of preserving the more intangible aspects of the libraries' heritage is perhaps exemplified by the way that a number of the participants' misinterpreted the notion of Cultural Identity to relate more specifically to their organisation's identity, rather than the cultural identity of their surrounding community. For example, in accordance with the definition provided on the card, participants UK17, UK1, UK16 and USA3 all discussed the role of their institution in preserving and promoting the cultural identity of their local area. UK17 described how 'everything we do is focused on the town, I mean [name of town] is what we're about…we promote knowledge of the locality'. A key element of this role was considered to revolve around preserving items related to local heritage that may otherwise have been lost over the course of their community's development:

> 'when things were being thrown away - buildings demolished, and everything else - people would bring in documents, records, things that they thought were important to preserve' (UK17)

UK1 similarly described how their collection of local nineteenth century satirical magazines was 'really unique' and had been saved after having been 'put in a skip by another library' because they had recognised they were 'really important' and said 'a lot about [name of city] during the time'.

Further to this, UK16 and USA3 considered their contributions to Cultural Identity to go beyond preserving heritage that is representative of their

community's identity to also include a role in fostering the continued growth of their community's cultural identity. UK16 described how much of their work is 'focus[ed on taking] care of the [name of region] identity', by 'foster[ing] links between local creatives' and 'helping [name of region] writers and [name of region] artists out'. USA3 similarly described how their role in supporting the cultural identity of their community went beyond 'historic preservation' to be about supporting 'contemporary [name of city] and the intellectual ferment that is going on here', by providing the opportunity for 'conversation and encounters' between local creatives such as 'the new director of this theatre company' and 'this new author'.

Such responses were consistent with the definition of Cultural Identity developed from the previous literature by the researcher. However, despite the examples of 'a town, region, or country' provided on the Cultural Identity card, many of the participants responses instead focused on considering their role in preserving and promoting their organisation's identity. For example, UK9's initial response to the card focused on the importance of preserving and promoting their organisation's identity 'as the oldest library in [name of city]' and maintaining its 'unique place in the landscape of the city'. USA6 similarly described how they 'strongly feel' the importance of their organisation's 'cultural identity' as 'one of the oldest cultural organisations in the State'.

Echoing the conflict detected between the importance placed on preserving the intangible heritage of the libraries' operations and the need to update and diversify their cultural offer, many of the interviewees who

misinterpreted the Cultural Identity card in this way proceeded to discuss what was described by USA2 as an ongoing 'identity crisis and crisis of purpose' faced by their libraries. For example, UK4 described how they had an 'issue…over the past few years' in deciding how to 'promote the place', and 'whether' they should 'promote the place as a historic National Trust style property or as a library for serious research'. UK14 described how over the years their 'identity' had become 'a little bit confused' owing to the 'wide variety of events that we hold…on top of trying to sell it as a library', while USA4 described how their institution had spent a long time 'struggling for mission, struggling for vision' and not being 'exactly sure where' they 'were'.

While the discussion surrounding the conflict between Heritage Preservation and Cultural Vitality had suggested that there were ongoing concerns amongst the governance committees and members about losing subscription library traditions, in specifically considering the identity of their organisation a number of interviewees suggested that there was a need to differentiate between the positive and negative aspects of their organisation's identity, and to identify which elements of this identity were worth keeping. For example, UK15 considered their institution's origins as a subscription library to have led to it developing an identity as a 'quite closed' organisation, and to continue 'maintaining the idea of a subscription library' would therefore mean that they wouldn't 'be surviving very long'.

While not thinking it was necessary to entirely 'dispel the idea of a subscription library', it was felt that the focus should be more on promoting 'its

tradition of independence' and that the library needed to be 're-present[ed]' as an 'independent' institution, 'rather than for a group of people'. UK13 similarly described how their institution's history as a subscription library had meant it had 'suffer[ed] from some negative perceptions' but was now 'beginning to be seen as…an independent space, a welcoming space, where people can come and do what they're interested in'. Meanwhile, USA3 described how it was necessary to try and move their organisation beyond its identity as a 'conservative membership institution' that seeks to 'recreate something that earlier generations liked', to being more about 'invoking very deep, idealistic notions' of 'libraries as spaces of freedom' and 'self-discovery', where 'you can read anything you want'.

By considering Cultural Identity to relate to their organisations' identities as libraries rather than the identities of their local communities, these responses suggest that a common concern for these institutions is the need to support a cultural identity that goes beyond geographic boundaries to encompass the kind of ideals that libraries seek to embody. This is epitomised by UK6's response, who suggested that the Cultural Identity that their institution exists to support needs to be thought of 'in less geographic terms and more in terms of the 'libraries themselves as cultural spaces'. Seeking to uphold 'a liberal identity', the institution's role is described as being to provide 'a space where people can come and read whatever they like, and debate what they want in a sort of reasoned and measured way.' Preserving 'the space of a library, the conditions of a library' and the opportunity for people to 'get some work done, think about

things, talk about things, read about things' in a 'very open' and 'safe space' is therefore described as being just as important as preserving 'the contents of it'.

4.2.1.4 Cultural Diversity

The data collected would appear to suggest that the area of Cultural Diversity is considered a weakness across the independent library sector in both countries, with none of the interviewees from either the ILA or MLG libraries having chosen this category as being representative of their organisations strongest contributions to cultural sustainability. Comments from participants when initially presented with the Cultural Diversity card included 'It's definitely an area where we could do more work on' (UK4), 'I'm not sure we do much in the way of cultural diversity' (UK17), and 'We fail on that entirely, I think' (UK8).

Interviewees felt that their institutions had a very limited audience, with their users being described as typically being white, retired, and middle to upper class. For example, UK4 described how 'a lot of the people we get here are 'English, white' and 'of a certain age', UK1 described how 'the people who…come here are often very white and middle class' and that 'they don't get very many young people', and UK3 explained that although they exist in a 'culturally diverse city', the membership of their institution remains 'White British'. USA1 meanwhile described how they had 'been very insular' and didn't 'normally attract members from other areas of the city' beyond the 'neighbourhood' in which they exist, which is considered to be a very privileged area of the city.

UK1 suggested that part of this problem was because of a lack of awareness of how to engage with audiences beyond their traditional user base. While acknowledging that their organisation was not 'deliberately' trying 'to be exclusive', they also felt that they had 'not been marketing and promoting themselves in the right places' to get beyond their traditional users and knowing 'how to do that' remained 'a bit of a question mark'. USA6 similarly described how, until recent years, they had done 'almost no outreach' and the 'membership' had therefore 'dwindled' and gotten 'old' because they had not been 'communicat[ing] to the outside world why one should join'.

Some participants also felt that owing to the nature of their collections, they had little to offer individuals beyond their traditional user base. For example, UK5 commented that 'although cultural diversity is something that we regard as very much a good thing…I'm not sure we are particularly tooled up for it with the collections that we've got', while UK3 described how part of the reason they 'don't have any members from other communities' is because their 'current provision of books…isn't culturally diverse'.

While one interviewee acknowledged that being 'a strikingly white place' that appeals to a 'more upper, middle class' audience is an issue for many heritage organisations (UK6), the majority of the participants felt that the lack of diversity in their user base was largely due to perceptions that had been built up of independent libraries as exclusive institutions. For example, UK16 described how 'the earlier connotations' of their organisation as a subscription library meant that 'the public' didn't see it 'as a space they can use', while USA5

described how a combination of their organisation's 'name', 'building' and the notion of a 'membership library' made their institution 'sound exclusive', with people not 'necessarily know[ing]' what it was for and it 'not necessarily seem[ing] inviting'.

However, a number of participants also reported that their organisations had made considerable efforts to change this image and broaden their audiences. Outreach projects were often considered by the participants as one of the most direct ways of addressing this issue, with UK4 describing how their school's outreach programme was 'the best' and 'main way of reaching out' and UK15 describing how their outreach programme enabled them 'to reach out quite successfully to different cultures and diversities'. The digitisation of collections was also often cited as having been key to increasing interactions with more diverse audiences, having provided the opportunity to gain an 'international readership' (UK5) that 'become very engaged' with their organisations in a 'purely digital way' (UK16).

Other interviewees suggested that there was a need for a more fundamental change within their organisation. Having 'for many years' been 'a local organisation for the local community', UK2 suggested that it had been necessary for their institute to change the way that it 'view[ed] itself'. Having refocused its efforts from being a 'lending library' to a 'special collections library', this had enabled the organisation to become 'far more than' what it was and extend its 'reach of users' to an 'international' level.

Similarly, to be able to appeal to the broadest audience possible, USA6 described how it had been necessary to reconsider their services in order for their organisation to reflect a more general change in people's lifestyles and a change in 'the way that people use libraries'. Describing how 'the workforce has changed', with people not 'necessarily working in an office with nine until five hours anymore' and instead 'working here and there on their laptops', the interviewee suggested that providing space and services that were 'really attractive to the digital nomad' had been crucial to enabling their organisation to become more 'appealing to a wider variety of folks'. Furthermore, the interviewee considered efforts to broaden the appeal of their institution to a wider range of users as crucial to the organisation's own sustainability, as 'being a membership organisation it would be a dumb idea to limit one's membership to any one group', and it was essential to 'appeal to' more 'than one group in order to stay vital'.

4.2.2 Challenges to and best practices for achieving sustainability in independent libraries

Having completed the questions related to the first set of cards, interviewees were subsequently presented with the second set of cards related to organisational sustainability. These cards provided the participants with six organisational factors by which to consider the challenges to achieving sustainability in their organisations. These six factors are Governance, Staffing, Funding, Collections, External Support, and Community and Users.

As with the previous cards, interviewees were first asked to order the cards according to the areas which they considered to present the main challenges to their organisation. This again produced a variety of responses. However, as can be seen in Table 4.4, the majority of the participants can be seen to have chosen either Funding, Governance, or Staffing as the area representing their organisation's greatest challenge. Indeed, 18 of the 19 participants from ILA libraries and six of the seven participants from MLG libraries chose one of these three areas.

Table 4.4 Areas considered by interviewees to present their organisation's main challenge to maintaining their contributions to cultural sustainability

Main challenge	ILA Libraries	MLG Libraries
Collections	0	0
Community and Users	1	2
External Support	0	0
Funding	6	2
Governance	7	1
Staffing	5	2

Outlined below are the common challenges discussed by participants in each area, as well as examples of best practice in overcoming these challenges.

4.2.2.1 Governance

The majority of the participants described how their organisation still retained a traditional governance structure. The typical format is to have a board of trustees, which can often include up to 25 individuals, who also form further sub-committees dealing with different aspects of the organisation. The board members are elected from the membership by their peers during the library's annual general meeting and will typically serve a term of around three or four years.

A common concern raised by many of the participants was that the size of their governance board was too unwieldly, making collaborative decision making difficult to achieve. Described by UK12 as the 'legacy of a structure that had come from the very beginnings…when the members were really running the library' and would've been involved in 'buying books and signing cheques and things like that', it was now felt that such governance structures were 'really unworkable for a modern charity'. USA5 similarly described the 'problematic legacy' of their 'governance structure', and the difficulty in establishing 'an engaged board of trustees that give generously with their time and their financial support'.

While originally committees would have met on a more regular basis and would need 'a vast body just in case only two or three turn up', it was now felt that the size of the committees could make it difficult for decisions to be made as it was impossible to 'have a conversation or anything with 24 people' (UK12).

UK9 similarly described how it was like having ‘21 bosses, all with different opinions on how the library should be run’, while UK8 commented that there was a need to ‘reorganise the committees because there are too many of them’.

With terms on the governance board typically lasting around three or four years, it was also felt that there was a lack of continuity which affected the ability to develop long term development strategies. As UK7 put it,

> ‘the presidency changes every four years, and with each president they always have different ideas, so they can go shooting off in different directions, the membership and management committee change as well…so it can be quite unsettling and make it quite hard in terms of making long term plans and having any kind of consistency’.

Another participant, UK8, felt that it also led to ‘a lot of money being wasted’, because each time ‘new management people’ come in, ‘they’ll decide that something is a great idea to do; some will spend money on equipment, and of course that equipment will be out of date in a year or two, and there’s no-one who’s got an overall sensible long-term plan’.

Another common problem identified with the governance was the lack of diversity in the type of people selected for the board. Although as UK11 put it, the traditional approach of individuals volunteering themselves and being elected by their fellow members appeared ‘to be the most democratic way possible’, in practice they ‘didn’t really promote the fact there were vacancies, they just thought of who might like to do it’. This could result in only ‘friends of

friends' being asked to join the board, who would usually come from the same background having only 'ever worked at management level or above, or [as] academics'. Some also felt that the kind of people on the board were often not as involved with the library as perhaps they should be, and in consequence they could lack understanding of how the library functions. UK5 commented that the reason for this was partly because the type of people who become involved at a governance level were 'people who don't often get the chance to come in and see what we do' owing to other commitments, and therefore they 'may not appreciate what we do as much as they might.' As UK7 put it,

> 'the people in charge tend not to be library people, you know they're happy to have the library, they like to show it off, but they're actually not that involved themselves. They tend not to be readers which is quite interesting, and the people who really care about the library are readers and they actually get their hands dirty and come in and volunteer'.

The possibility of conflict between the governing committee and the staff over how the libraries should be run was also identified as an issue. For example, while UK13 stated that they currently had very supportive governing boards 'who get on wonderfully', it was also acknowledged that sometimes there had been 'trustees and chairs that haven't been as supportive' of the staff's ideas for the development of the institution. USA3 similarly described how while 'board members' are often 'successes in their own realm' and 'used to getting their way', they 'don't know much about the business of the library'. This was

said to lead to a ‘tension’ building between certain board members and the director of the library, with everything ‘eventually…blow[ing] up’ between them.

A number of the libraries had taken steps to overcome these issues. Some, such as UK12, had taken steps to ‘modernise the governance’ of their library, with crucial changes including downsizing the governance board to around half its original size and allowing ‘the possibility of immediate re-election for a second term’ so as to enable ‘a mix of new blood and people staying on to try and get a bit of continuity’. Such changes were considered to have been instrumental in ‘increasing the commitment and engagement of the trustees’ and were said to be ‘working very successfully’.

UK11 and USA5 meanwhile described having taken similar steps to develop a more considered recruitment processes, with UK11 having established a ‘nominations committee’ who would be responsible for ‘looking at the balance of skills on the board each year’, looking at ‘who’s coming off, and what new skills do we need and put that into advertising to members’, and USA5 having taken steps to ‘energise’ their ‘nominating committee to bring in the right mix of skills’. As UK11 went on to describe, these skills would include not only ‘the broad set of skills that you need to simply be a trustee’, including the ability ‘to make collective decisions’ and be able to think about ‘the organisation as a whole rather than just the bit that you happen to be interested in’, but also more specialist skills so that the board would include ‘a certain number of people who have got enough financial knowledge to really interrogate the financial position’ as well as people ‘who can help with fundraising’ and

‘people who can help with marketing and communications’. Making sure that ‘there are some heavy users of the library, the people who are often here every day’, was also considered a priority.

Crossing over into the later discussion on Staffing, a factor identified by some of the participants as having helped their organisation overcome a resistance to change within the governing body was the appointment of new leaders. These leaders were often credited by the interviewees as having brought a new outlook to the organisation, while also managing to ensure that longstanding members and trustees understood the need for change and did not feel alienated by these changes. UK9 described how a newly appointed Executive Director ‘was a breath of fresh air’ and had been instrumental in making ‘the stuffy atmosphere more welcoming without upsetting the original membership’. USA4 meanwhile described how there had been a long period during which their library had been ‘struggling for mission, struggling for vision’, and attributed the appointment of a new Head Librarian as being the turning point in addressing these issues as they ‘really crafted who we were’ and developed ‘a new vision’ for the library. USA2 similarly described how a recent overhaul of their library’s services ‘was mostly the idea of our director’ who had seen ‘the writing on the wall for membership libraries’ and ‘had the courage in her convictions’ to take the library to ‘where she believed it needed to go’.

4.2.2.2 Staffing

Many of the interviewees described how their organisations still maintained fairly traditional staffing structures, sometimes even using 'historical job title[s]' (UK1) such as 'Library Administrator' (UK1) and 'Library Warden' (UK6) that had been employed since their library was founded. It was felt that these job titles were often no longer a true reflection of what the posts entailed. UK13 noted how their 'role as librarian' was 'certainly not a traditional librarian's role' and although it 'probably was 20 years ago when the focus was on the events weren't considered as important', it had since 'evolved quite significantly'. By holding on to these traditional posts it was felt that the staffing structure did not match the changing needs of the organisation and it was therefore difficult to sustain their expanding activities.

This growing imbalance between staffing and activity levels was attributed by a number of participants to a reluctance on the part of their governing body to invest in more staff, despite their ambitions to increase the services on offer. UK5 remarked how 'we don't have enough of us to do what we need to do…particularly because the governors' ambition is to have the place open more, but they are not proposing to give us any more staff', while UK7 noted that 'if they want to do all the things that they want to do they're going to have to accept they have to spend money, and that includes money on staff'. This reluctance to invest in staff was seen to partly stem from a nostalgic belief held by some of the governors who had been long-term members in the traditional staffing of the library. As UK7 reflected,

> ‘I think in some ways we are living in the past, because until about the 1980s or 1990s the actual practical management of the place was done by the librarian…so I think they’re used to thinking that one person can do it all’.

With a lack of available staff, several interviewees described how most of their time had to be devoted to ensuring the continued every day running of their libraries. UK16 described how ‘we have a tendency to just go from event to event, or exhibition to exhibition, or whatever we’re doing, and it’s always pretty manic’, while UK15 remarked that ‘everything we do is pretty much always done on the day because it’s day-to-day, finding the time and the space’. Similar concerns were also raised by the participants in the USA, with USA5 describing how ‘not being able to hire more staff to alleviate all the work, because everybody is always doing five different jobs’ as one of their main concerns and USA6 describing how their ability to carry out any large-scale development projects was hindered by the fact that their organisation has ‘forever’ been ‘chronically understaffed’.

Having staff dedicated to such activities was pinpointed by UK3 as being a necessity for the development of their library, especially when it came to applying for funding for future development projects:

> ‘we just don’t have the time, because it’s a full-time job to apply for funding, so we can’t do it because we’re having to do several other things

which is pulling our interest away, when what we really need is to bite the bullet and employ someone as a Fundraising Officer.'

However, even in the libraries where staff had been employed to complete specific projects, it was still felt that owing to the ongoing issue of being 'chronically understaffed', there was a continued tendency for staff to be 'dragged off…to sort out other problems' rather than focus entirely on the project for which they had been employed to complete (UK2).

A number of the libraries had taken steps to overcome these issues, including developing new staffing structures that better reflect the needs associated with the diversification in services that has occurred in recent years. As previously touched upon when discussing improvements to the governance of the libraries, some interviewees described how the appointment of a new leader in a newly created position had improved the overall running of their organisation. Rather than having a Librarian as the head of the organisation, for example, USA6 described how they now have 'an Executive Director' who 'oversees the Library Director' and 'the Events Director…and then they all have their tree of staff beneath them'. UK12 similarly described how they had appointed a 'Chief Executive' and an 'executive team' who are each responsible for overseeing specific aspects of the organisation, such as the 'Finance Director' who 'looks after the broader financial strategy' and the 'Development Director who heads the marketing, fundraising, and communications side of the business'. Further 'teams' below the Directors were then described as 'head[ing] up various departments within the library'.

Having roles dedicated to specific tasks such as fundraising and marketing which in the past had been treated as additional activities to be divided between existing staff was also seen as a crucial step in the 'professionalisation of the library' and the ability to 'create more development opportunities' by USA4. UK2 similarly described how 'professionalising the service' and getting a 'proper Marketing Department, Courses Department, and Events Department' had been crucial to 'bring[ing] the library along' and turning it around from being a 'quaint' and 'old' institution that 'no one knew about' to one that's 'reputation' and 'user figures' have 'consistently' been 'going up and up and up'.

Lastly, it is worth noting that several of the participants also identified the use of volunteers as a strategy for dealing with the effects of being understaffed. However, the extent to which this was considered helpful varied widely between the libraries. For example, some described volunteers as being crucial to the continued operation and development of their organisations. UK5 described how 'without volunteers I could just about keep things ticking over, but I couldn't do all the other things I want to do' while UK13 stated that they 'couldn't run 200 events a year' if they 'didn't have volunteers to help'. Smaller institutions even described themselves as being entirely dependent on volunteers, having 'no professional staff' and being 'all volunteers' (UK18) or having only 'two full-time staff' and 'mainly volunteers' (UK19).

Other participants such as UK2 meanwhile felt that volunteers could cause 'more problems than what you get back', with each individual volunteer

needing ‘managing’ according to ‘what they can do and their expectations’. UK11 similarly described how there were many ‘downsides’ to using volunteers as ‘they need a lot of cherishing’, while USA7 stated that they ‘don’t use volunteers’ because ‘a volunteer programme requires somebody’s time to manage it and I just don’t have the staff to do that’. As well as volunteers taking ‘so much managing’, UK12 also expressed concerns over their use as it was felt that the lack of ‘managerial control’ over volunteers could be detrimental to the ‘quality of service’ provided, which was considered the ‘absolute beginning, middle and end of what we’re about’.

Two strategies were detected as having been adopted by some of the libraries to overcome these issues. Some institutions had chosen to only use volunteers for completing ‘very basic things like sticking date labels in books’ (UK9) and for ‘large projects that are easy to train someone to do’ (USA6). On the opposite end of the spectrum, other institutions had taken the decision to be very selective in the use of volunteers and use only those that are ‘very highly skilled’ such as ‘retired librarians’ and ‘conservation students’ (UK12) or those who have ‘specific archiving skills’ (USA5).

4.2.2.3 Funding

As USA3 described, ‘the typical formula’ traditionally used for funding independent libraries is ‘one third membership, one third endowment, and one third rental income’. However, in practice, not all of the libraries stick to this

formula and the degree to which organisations rely on each kind of income can vary widely.

For those who own premises in central locations within the towns and cities in which they exist, a large portion of the funding required to sustain their organisations is often procured through rental income obtained by leasing out floors in their buildings to other businesses. Many of the participants attributed this income as being crucial to enabling their organisation's survival. As UK9 explained,

> 'The reason why we've been able to keep going when other libraries like us have fallen by the wayside is because the canny men who built the building built it with the shops, so we get rental from the shops'

USA6 similarly described how '40 percent' of their funding 'comes from the fact that we own our own building and have five floors of rental space. This income was described as having been 'critical' to the organisation 'since the beginning', especially as 'many' other independent libraries 'had existed in the city' and 'all had failed because they didn't have the rental income'.

Longstanding endowment funds were also credited with having provided financial stability for some institutions. UK2 described how the 'annual endowment' originally set up 'for the running of the institute' had been 'invested' and used to 'buy property' by 'some very astute governors over the years', enabling the organisation to remain 'financially stable'. USA1 described how they were 'fortunate' to 'have a substantial endowment that covers about 30

percent' of their 'operating budget' and dates 'back close to 200 years, when a lot of people began to start investing in the place'.

As the third traditional source of income membership fees were often described as providing minimal financial benefit for the libraries. As USA2 described, while their 'membership does bring in some money', it wasn't considered 'a lucrative revenue source' for their organisation. This was generally attributed to a belief that membership fees should be 'reasonable' (UK9) and 'modest' (UK3), and a reluctance to 'tax the members too much by increasing membership fees too often or too high' despite the fact that the libraries' 'expenses increase every year' (USA5).

To further corroborate these elucidations, the researcher was prompted to return to the ILA and MLG websites to conduct a survey of the standard annual fee for an individual membership offered by the libraries. As illustrated by Figure 4.14 below, the membership rates charged are often of a nominal amount, with the rate offered by nine of the 21 libraries who charge membership fees in the UK being below £50 per year and a further six being below £100 per year. A similar cost of standard individual membership is also provided by the 20 libraries who charge membership fees in the USA, with eight charging below the equivalent of £50 per year and a further six charging below the equivalent of £100 per year.

Figure 4.14 Standard annual fee for individual membership of the ILA and MLG libraries

With membership fees generally being considered to only procure a minimal income, the majority of the participants considered their organisations to have a greater reliance on rental incomes and endowment funds. However, while these two streams of funding were considered a great asset by participants and attributed as having enabled their long-term survival, they also felt that there was a number of challenges presented by their organisations' reliance on them. Some participants remarked that they had not always proven to be as reliable sources of funding as might be expected, with UK9 describing how it was a 'worry' that 'when the shop rents come up for renewal' they 'might lose' the current businesses occupying the premises and have no rental income until a new tenant could be found. UK14 described how a 'previous tenant left the shop' and it 'took over ten months before they found a new tenant, so during that time there was no income coming in'. UK6 explained how after '2008 and

the financial crash' their library 'had a couple of rough years', and there was now no longer any 'sort of endowment pot', while UK5 described how 'there's never been a worse time for living on an investment fund' as 'returns are absolutely abysmal'.

Another difficulty identified by some participants was the fact that the income they receive from these sources very rarely procures enough to cover anything more than the everyday running costs of their libraries. As a result, this could lead to a fear of spending on the development of services. As UK12 put it, when it comes to the development of their library they are 'very much erring on the side of caution' as 'they want to make sure that the library is solvent and that the library has funds to protect itself in case of emergencies'. As a result, when it comes to 'taking 'a bit of extra cash' to 'try and push the library to the next level' they don't have 'the guts to do it'. UK14 also described a cautious attitude to spending, with their organisation having made a 'deliberate decision' to build up a considerable amount of 'reserves in the trust account' which would be retained so that they could be 'sure' that they 'could continue to run the library for 18 months at least if, for some reason, [they] didn't get the rent coming in'.

To overcome these issues, a number of the participants described steps that had been taken by their organisations to move away from a reliance on the three traditional sources of funding, with the aim being to build what USA1 described as 'more diverse revenue streams'. The development of more commercial streams of funding was highlighted as one way to do this. Sometimes, these commercial activities would have direct connections to the

libraries and their work in preserving and promoting their collections. For example, USA1 told of how they had developed ‘a business in the backroom’ which ‘provides some of the most high-quality imaging services in the region’. As well as ‘generating revenue’, the business was also said to benefit the library by providing the opportunity to use the equipment for the digitisation of their own collections. Similarly, USA4 described how they were ‘looking to grow our earned income’, by ‘capitalising on the collections and seeing what we can design and sell’.

However, the most common stream of commercial funding developed by the libraries is the letting of the library space for private events and functions, which do not necessarily have any connection to the library’s own activities. For example, UK4 described how they had ‘started having weddings to raise revenue’, despite the fact that they are clearly not one of their organisations ‘key objectives’. While a number of participants acknowledged that this could provide a welcome source of additional income, it was also considered to raise concerns with regard to what USA4 described as the possibility of ‘mission drift’ in an organisation as it increasingly focuses on bringing in revenue from such sources rather than on cultural activities that are more ‘mission appropriate’. As UK13 and UK1 both explained with regard to room hire, because the letting of the library space prevents its use ‘for our own activities’ (UK13), it was crucial to achieve ‘a balance’ between ‘the cultural activities which let’s face it, don’t make us any money, and the room hire, and get those two things working together’ (UK1).

Further to this line of discussion, UK6 highlighted a need for the independent library sector to become 'more commercially minded' with regard to placing monetary value on their cultural activities. Acknowledging that 'libraries and commerce are something that people struggle with' and that there is 'a bit of a hair-shirt culture' regarding asking for payment or funding towards cultural events and activities, the interviewee described how in recent years their organisation had developed a 'tremendously relaxed' attitude and had become 'a lot more confident in saying 'this is worth x, so we're going to charge x'.

While UK6 recognised that 'pricing culture at commercial rates' could have the effect of limiting themselves to an 'exclusive audience', a number of steps had been taken to overcome this. For example, while the typical ticket price for the organisation's events was said to be £7, a recent collaboration with an external partner organisation who could offset some of the costs involved had enabled ticket prices for a recent event to be reduced to £2. This had been found to be very successful in bringing 'in a completely different audience' from the 'traditional heritage audience'. In addition, the library had also taken the decision to take the 'standard charge off the reader card' and allow prospective members to 'give as much or as little as they want'. While making it possible for those on a low income to join for free, it had also had the effect of allowing the membership fee to become viewed 'as more of a charitable donation' and therefore enable the library to receive far more substantial sums from wealthier individuals. Indeed, in the first year, the initiative was said to have 'brought in ten times what the reader's tickets had been bringing in'.

Interestingly, UK6 described this method of receiving additional funding from wealthy individuals as being ‘a liberal interpretation’ of methods used ‘in American libraries’, where some of the libraries have ‘different bands or circles’ of membership such as ‘patrons or friends’ that pay different amounts for additional benefits. This again prompted the researcher to return to the ILA and MLG library websites, to review the membership rates on offer in each of the libraries. As can be seen in Figure 4.15, while it is not uncommon for the libraries in both countries to offer concessionary rates of membership, only two of the 21 libraries that charge membership fees in the UK offer what can be described as benefactor rates. In comparison 15 of the 20 libraries charging membership fees in the USA offer such rates.

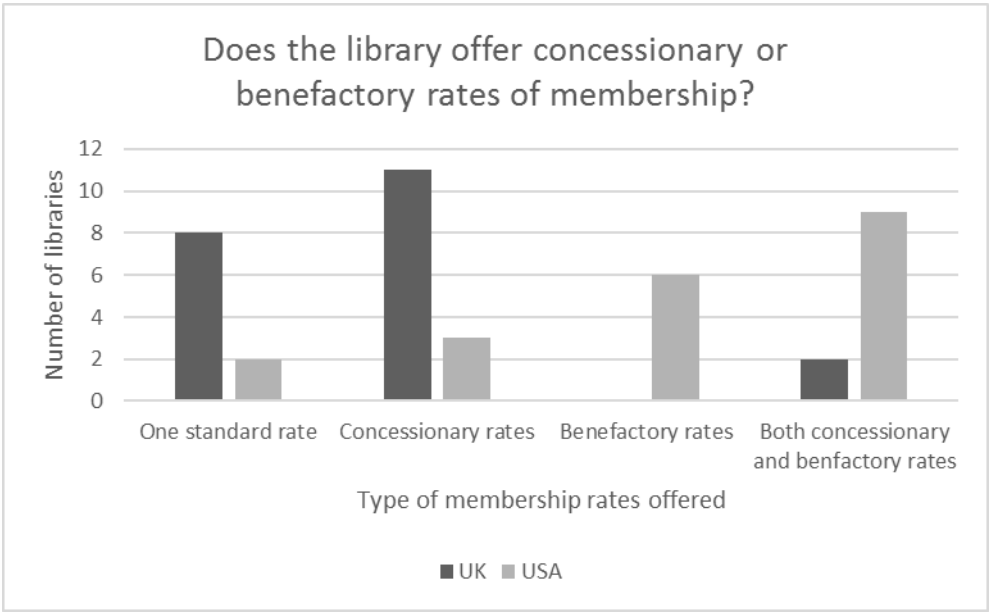

Figure 4.15 Type of membership rates offered by the ILA and MLG libraries

These higher rates provide individuals with the opportunity to receive additional benefits in exchange for a larger annual membership fee. The

majority of the libraries that offer such rates do so on a tiered system, with each tier providing additional benefits according to the fee paid. For example, as well as a standard membership fee of $100 (£71.74), the Charleston Library Society in South Carolina also offers the opportunity to become part of its 'Association of Fellows'. In exchange for supporting 'the conservation and development of the collections and the programs offered' by the library, the Fellows are entitled to such privileges as the 'use of the Ross Fellows Room' and the opportunity to attend 'exclusive Fellows events'. Rates vary from $500 (£358.72) to become a 'John Drayton Fellow' to $10,000 (£7174.35) to become a '1748 Fellow' with additional benefits being acquired with each rate.

Returning to the interview data, this can be seen to illustrate one of the most prominent differences between the independent libraries in the UK and USA in that it seems to be far more common practice in the US for the libraries to receive financial support from major donors. Indeed, as well as tiered membership systems, several of the participants from the libraries in the USA described themselves as benefiting substantially from the 'annual generosity of [their] board' (USA1), or from 'a number of donors who give money every year' (USA2). In addition, some American participants also described how their libraries held annual 'benefit dinners' (USA2) and 'annual appeals' (USA5) to procure further funding through such donations.

Meanwhile, when discussing private giving in the UK, the picture built by participants suggested that the funding that they receive in this manner is on a far more irregular basis. For example, UK1 described how 'we get the odd

bequest here and there and I think in the past we've had the odd pot of money donated but, you know, nothing recently', while UK13 explained that although they 'get legacies every now and again', it was impossible for them to 'rely on donations and legacies because you really just don't know when they're going to come in'. UK9 similarly described how some of their 'trustees have this really skewed idea that there's all these rich people in [name of city] that are desperate to give us their money, but in our experience, that's not true'.

From this data it would appear that it is far more common for libraries in the USA to have established mechanisms to ask directly for major donations from individuals. As a result, such donations are generally described as a more reliable and regular source of funding than by the libraries in the UK. Nevertheless, some of the participants from the UK did describe efforts by their institutions to increase the amount of funding they receive in this area. UK13 described how a recent appeal had led to them receiving 'about 100,000 pounds' from a donor which was put forward to enable 'repair jobs that hadn't been done for decades' to be carried out on their building. Similarly, UK12 described how having been 'quite successful' and received 'two endowments' that came to 'nearly 800,000 pounds' in the previous year, they had now taken the decision to make more effort to 'fundraise directly for endowments' in the future.

4.2.2.4 External Support

The discussion on External Support centred around two main topics of conversation. These included the ability of the libraries to obtain support from external funding bodies such as the government and private foundations and the support available from other local organisations through partnerships and collaborations.

Although discussion surrounding the topic of gaining support from external funding bodies had some crossover with the previous discussion related to the area of Funding, for many of the participants the financial support available from external bodies was not considered to provide a particularly noteworthy source of funding for their institutions. This largely appeared to be because one of the requirements attached to the funding made available by such bodies is that it must be used for the completion of specific projects. While this was of course considered beneficial in carrying out such work, many of the participants felt the inability of their organisations to meet the everyday running costs of their institutions needed to be addressed first before the full benefit of such project work could be recognised. As UK4 explained:

> 'I think the difficult thing is trying to raise money just to keep going, and that is a hard one to do. If you have set projects [to fund] then you can do that, but if you want money to pay our wages then you know, that is harder, and I think that's going to continue to be a challenge going forward'

UK13 also described how they had received ‘grants from various organisations’ in the past, but that they had been for ‘specific things and not the general pot’, and while that was ‘all well and good’ it was the ‘running costs that we’re particularly concerned with’. For the majority of participants, the main difficulty in accessing such funding from external bodies was considered to relate back to the issues previously discussed regarding the area of Staffing. As several participants described, a lot of ‘energy’ is required for ‘writing grant applications’ (USA2) as it is a ‘very complicated and time consuming’ process (UK5). Staff don’t often ‘have the time to do it’ (UK7) as a ‘dedicated person’ is needed for ‘serious funding bids’ (UK15).

However, UK19 highlighted how partnering with other local organisations with similar interests had been particularly fruitful in accessing external funding. Describing one project that had focused upon ‘making connections’ between their libraries’ collections and the collections held at a nearby museum, the participant explained how as a ‘little institution’ they had particularly benefited from the ‘expertise’ and the ‘capacity’ provided by the larger and more established organisation with whom they had partnered during the bid writing process. The fact that the larger organisation had a ‘designated collection’ also enabled the participant’s organisation to ‘piggyback’ on their ‘status’ and access funding that they otherwise would not have been eligible for.

Further to the benefits that collaborating on such projects could have regarded to accessing funding from external bodies, UK19 also described how such collaborative working could have ‘really long-lasting results’ by building up

connections between the ‘people’ at each institution and getting the staff at the partner institution to ‘know more about us’ and ‘point people to us’. Building such supportive relationships were said to have numerous benefits. UK13 described how having developed ‘a much better relationship with universities’ in the area, they were now getting ‘a lot of students’ through their doors, helping to diversify their user base from what had been a ‘very much ageing membership’. Working with the local public library on cultural events was also said to be helpful as they could do ‘a lot to assist’ their institution in terms of ‘marketing’.

UK9 similarly described how building ‘really good working relationships with the [local] Universities’ had provided a useful source of expertise in planning exhibitions as university staff with particular areas of expertise could come in and ‘curate exhibitions’ so the staff ‘didn’t have to do very much apart from give them the space to do it.’ A number of participants in the USA described how partnerships with a wide range of organisations was especially beneficial in ‘getting the word out about what we do’ (USA2), and ‘help[ing] to pass the word on and enrich the gene pool’ (USA3) by bringing in ‘a different audience’ from the traditional ‘library audience’ (USA5).

When asked how these partnerships had initially arisen, the most common response from participants was that, as UK3 put it, they came about through ‘dropping a word here and there’. Indeed, UK1, UK2, UK3, UK4, UK7, UK8, UK12, UK18, UK19, USA1 and USA5 all used the phrases ‘word of mouth’ or ‘friends of friends’ to describe how these partnerships had initially been brokered. While many institutions provided examples of successful

collaborations with local organisations, because of these informal methods of establishing partnerships some felt that not enough was being done ‘to facilitate’ the development of ‘really engaging relationships’ that ‘go beyond just one event’ (UK11). It was also felt that relationships between institutions could have ‘peaks and troughs’, because it was never ‘set in stone what is required’ by each organisation and there could be ‘mixed ideas of what is expected’ from the relationship as a result (UK1).

Some institutions had however taken steps to overcome this issue. Having acknowledged the numerous benefits of building local partnerships, USA6 described how their organisation had recently decided to employ a ‘Strategic Partnerships Manager’ who would be solely responsible for looking ‘at ways to strategically partner with other organisations’ in a ‘systematic’ and ‘organised way’ to develop more ‘formal reciprocal relationships’. Similarly, UK16 described how plans to employ an ‘Academic Officer’ would help to ‘facilitate’ building better relationships ‘with the academic community’ by enabling a ‘dedicated person’ to be available to ‘build deeper connections’ with staff in the local universities and schools.

4.2.2.5 Collections

For many of the participants their organisation’s collections were considered integral to the existence of their institutions. In particular, the fact that their institutions are still focused on collecting printed material was considered an important factor for differentiating independent libraries from other kinds of

libraries. USA3 described how in comparison to public and academic libraries that now have ‘a whole other agenda’ based on the changing needs of their users, their library continues to ‘have this single focus on books and book lovers’. USA5 similarly described how in comparison to public libraries which have ‘become more like community centres’, their library is ‘still very focused on books’ and developing ‘a community of writers and readers’, while UK15 explained that for themselves and for ‘many others in the independent library sector, promot[ing] the printed, physical book’ is a key aspect of their work.

While the majority of the participants agreed on the importance of maintaining and promoting their collections, many also felt that they remained underused. UK1 described how people would generally join their library ‘because they want to come to the events’, leaving the books to be considered as ‘a nice add on’ and more like ‘a decoration in the rooms’ than as something to be read. UK8 similarly described how people would join their library because ‘they hear about the courses and then the library is a nice add on’. UK14 described their members as being ‘supportive’ of the library collections but not ‘actually us[ing] them’, while UK18 stated that ‘very few’ of their members ‘borrow books’.

To overcome this, a number of institutions had taken steps to reinstate their collections at the centre of their organisation’s activities. UK2 described how their organisation ‘treats’ the ‘collections as the heart of what it does’ by ‘using them across the institute in the courses’ that it runs. UK16 described how they had been increasingly hosting exhibitions and events that

are all ‘based on the books’ rather than on subject matter external to the library, and that this had been ‘quite successful’ in ‘increasing interest in the collections’.

The specialisation of collections according to their key strengths was another strategy used by some institutions to increase their readership. As previously discussed in section 4.2.1.4, this could help to improve the ‘reach’ of the collections by increasing their appeal beyond ‘the local community’ to an ‘international’ research audience (UK2). In fact UK2 described how since developing a special collections focus they now have ‘researchers coming from all over the world to use the collections’, while USA4 similarly described how having ‘lost’ a lot of their ‘traditional lending library readership’ narrowing the focus of their collections according to its key subject strengths had enabled them to ‘become an internationally renowned research library’ that facilitates ‘students, scholars, and educators’ in their work.

Specialisation was also considered a useful way to overcome another key issue identified by many of the participants regarding the lack of space available in their buildings to store their ever-growing collections. Because ‘one of the original rules’ of many independent libraries was to not ‘get rid of anything’ (UK9), many of the participants described how their institutions find space to be ‘a massive problem’ as they can’t ‘actually throw anything out…unless [they] change the rules’ (UK13). Those that had chosen to become special collections considered this transition to provide the ideal opportunity to update their ‘weeding policy and acquisition policy’ to ‘reflect’ the ‘change in

focus of their organisation' (USA2) and allow for more sustainable policies to be put into place.

4.2.2.6 Community and Users

The majority of participants described their typical users as being either 'late career' or 'retired' (USA1). USA1 stated that '93%' of their members are '55 and over', UK3 stated that '95%' of their membership are '65 and over', and UK13 stated that 'about 90%' of their membership is 'retired'. While USA1 did not consider this to be an issue, as 'lifestyles and lifespans have changed' and people in their retirement now 'have money…leisure…and appetite' which would provide their library with a continual stream of new members, a common concern amongst most of the participants in relation to the area of Community and Users was the need to attract new members beyond what was considered to be an 'ageing membership' (UK13). Following on from USA6's comments in section 4.2.1.4 on the need to 'appeal to' more 'than one group in order to stay vital', the majority of participants agreed that having 'a diversity of users' was essential to having 'a sustainable institution' (USA4) and that it was crucial that they continue to work 'to create a 'solid, very wide, very diverse user base (UK6)'.

A general lack of awareness of their organisations within the wider community was considered one of the main issues that needed to be addressed in order to attract new members. Many described how members of the local community visiting their library for the first time would comment that they had

been unaware of its existence. UK7 described how they would 'quite often have people coming in who would say "I've lived here 50 years and never knew this place existed"', while UK8 commented that 'It's staggering the lack of knowledge about us…we will have at least two but sometimes ten people a week come through the door and look around and say "I've been in [name of town] all my life and I didn't know it was here"'. USA5 described how their institution had 'been in the city for all this time', but was 'still under the radar', while USA1 remarked that 'If you go out onto [name of nearby Square] and were to stop any passer-by and ask them what they think of the [name of library], they would say "The what?"- they have never heard of it – nobody has ever heard of it'.

Several participants identified street visibility as a specific issue contributing to the lack of awareness of their institutions. As UK7 remarked, 'I think we have a bit of a problem with the building, although it's not tiny, people seem not to see it, they walk right past it'. USA5 similarly explained how 'on a busy street like this' people 'don't notice' their building because 'there's so many other things going on', while USA1 described how 'people walk past' their building and while they may 'glance at it' they would tend to think 'that's formidable, I shouldn't go in there'.

As well as being put off by the 'formidable' exterior of their heritage buildings, some participants also felt that their institutions struggled to recruit new members due to persisting perceptions of independent libraries being elitist institutions. Many of the interviewees described how over the course of the twentieth century their libraries had 'lost track' of their 'origins and become elitist

clubs'(UK8), seeing 'their role only as a kind of club for 'old boys' who share a particular bibliographic interest' (UK14). Yet as UK15 explained, while the majority of the libraries had since been working 'very, very hard' to dispel these perceptions and 'bring' their libraries 'out into the community', it was felt that they were 'still a long way from convincing people that we're not elitist'.

This air of exclusivity was said to be further compounded by what several of the interviewees described as being a desire by some of their membership to be secretive about the library's existence. UK9 described how 'the classic thing that happens is that somebody will join, and they will say things like "Why did I never know you were here?" and then as soon as they join they don't want anyone else to join, because it's their private place then'. Meanwhile, when describing media coverage of their library, USA5 remarked that although members would be 'proud' they would also get 'a little upset' because they didn't 'want people to know about us'. This insularity was considered to make it difficult to recruit members beyond the traditional user group particularly when 'word-of-mouth'(UK7) or 'hear[ing] about us through a friend'(USA6) were often described as the main means by which new members would be attracted to their institutions.

As well as taking more general steps to build 'formal marketing strategies' (UK2) and to develop 'programming' that would 'attract younger and more diverse audiences' (USA3), several participants also identified more specific methods taken by their institutions to overcome these issues. For example, UK9 described how increasing their 'presence on the street' through

‘window displays’ and ‘A-boards’ had been particularly successful in increasing awareness of their institution. UK8 similarly explained how adding additional signage that explains ‘a bit about’ their library alongside the original ‘nineteenth century plaques’ had ‘definitely made a difference’ to getting ‘more people coming in’, while USA5 described how although there had originally been some opposition to having something as ‘gauche’ as a ‘sandwich board’ outside their building, it had since been quite successful at making their library ‘seem more inviting’.

In order to address the elitist perceptions of independent libraries, USA4 described how they had made efforts to change their marketing strategy so that the fee charged for membership would be seen more ‘as a donation’ rather than as something that would provide ‘privileges’. While it was acknowledged that ‘some’ members continued to be ‘more interested’ in the ‘benefits’ of membership, the participant felt that the majority of members now saw their membership ‘as a way that they can support the library’ and aid it in having a ‘positive impact on the community and the world around us’. To address the secretive attitude that some members could have about their institution, USA1 described how they now allowed members to ‘bring a friend to certain events for free’. This strategy was considered to have been particularly successful in ‘bringing in new people’ with a recent event having ‘135 attending’, ‘50 or so’ of whom ‘were members’ guests’.

4.3 Summary of the Findings

4.3.1 Profile of the independent libraries and their cultural heritage assets

The profile developed during the first stage of data collection established that the independent libraries in the ILA and MLG maintain an array of important cultural heritage assets. As well as their book collections, these assets also include more unusual collections of physical artefacts and archives that have significant cultural value for both their local communities and for researchers more widely. Their buildings are often historic landmarks within the towns and cities in which they exist and along with the 'traditional' library environment which they seek to maintain, can provide a unique cultural venue for their members and visitors to experience a diverse range of cultural events.

In terms of the cultural heritage assets maintained by the libraries, it is possible to identify four categories:

- Tangible cultural artefacts related to organisational heritage (e.g. institutional archives)
- Tangible cultural artefacts related to community heritage (e.g. community archives)
- Intangible organisational heritage (e.g. subscription library traditions, events that seek to impart knowledge on the libraries' histories)
- Intangible community heritage (e.g. events that seek to impart knowledge on local community history)

These categories are by no means discrete. Tangible assets such as the libraries' book collections and buildings can be seen to have relevance to both organisational heritage and community heritage. However, they do provide a useful means by which to broaden understanding of the heritage maintained by the libraries beyond the notion of physical cultural artefacts typically employed in previous cultural sustainability research.

4.3.2 Perceived contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability

The first half of the interview data reported in section 4.2 proceeded to consider the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability through the areas of Heritage Preservation, Cultural Vitality, Cultural Identity, and Cultural Diversity. In general, Heritage Preservation was considered their strongest and most important contribution, while Cultural Diversity was considered their weakest area. It also became clear during the discussion of the four different parameters that participants felt that their contributions to each area could conflict with each other. For example, while increasing Cultural Vitality was considered essential to improving the sustainability of the libraries as organisations, it was felt that it could put their work in the area of Heritage Preservation at risk.

These concerns were particularly evident in the participants views on the potential contributions of their institutions to Cultural Identity, which many took to relate to their work in preserving and promoting the cultural identity of their

libraries rather than preserving and promoting the identity of the wider local community. Since this identity was described by participants as often being closely linked to maintaining a traditional library environment, efforts to improve their contributions to Cultural Vitality and Cultural Diversity could cause conflict. This appeared to be an issue of much concern across the sector, with participants describing how their organisations were currently facing an 'identity crisis' owing to their need to expand their cultural offer and attract more diverse audiences while simultaneously working to preserve their organisational heritage and identity.

4.3.3 Challenges to and best practices for achieving sustainability in independent libraries

The second half of the interview data reported in section 4.2 considered the challenges faced at an organisational level in ensuring the sustainability of the libraries and best practices for overcoming these challenges. While participants were quite evenly divided over considering the most challenging area for their organisation to be either Governance, Staffing, or Funding, the same overarching challenge regarding the need to update structures can be seen to be apparent in all three areas. Table 4.5 provides a summary of the main challenges and the best practices for overcoming these challenges in relation to each of the organisational factors discussed with participants.

Table 4.5 Summary of the challenges to and best practices for achieving sustainability

Factor	Challenges	Best practices
Governance	- Outdated governance structure too unwieldly and lacking continuity, diversity, and direction	- Update governance structure by downsizing the board - Update election rules to allow re-election and enable continuity - Establish nominations committee to ensure a diverse range of members with the required skills and knowledge is recruited - Establish an Executive Director position to oversee the development of library, manage expectations of staff/governance and give leadership and direction
Staffing	- Outdated staffing structures not reflecting expanding programmes of activity	- Update staffing structures to include roles dedicated to specific tasks of increasing importance (e.g. marketing, fundraising etc.) - Carefully managed volunteers
Funding	- Reliance on traditional funding streams which can be unreliable and provide no extra income for development	- Diversification of funding streams, especially in terms of developing commercial activities - More realistic pricing of cultural events, finding ways to offset the costs and keep accessible - Establishing mechanisms to increase income from individual giving (particularly in the UK)
External Support	- Difficulty in accessing funding from external bodies owing to time-consuming nature of bid applications - Partnerships and collaborations with other organisations lacking formality and longevity	- Employment of dedicated fundraising staff - Partnering with other organisations on funding bids so as to harness their expertise and increase capacity - Staff focusing on the development of more strategic, long-term partnerships
Collections	- Lack of use of collections - Lack of space for expanding collections	- Reasserting their central importance to the library by building connections to the collections into other cultural activities - Specialisation to attract researchers and provide opportunity to develop more sustainable collection policies
Community and Users	- Ageing membership, lacking diversity - Lack of awareness of library's existence in wider community - Persisting perceptions of exclusivity/elitism - Secretive attitude of members	- Development of formal marketing strategies - More diverse programming to attract new, younger audiences - Increase street visibility through new signage - Marketing membership according to its supportive function rather than according to the benefits it procures - Provide incentives for current members to introduce new prospective members

4.3.4 Similarities and differences between independent libraries in the UK and USA

Regarding the comparisons between the UK's ILA libraries and the USA's MLG libraries, the findings of this research would appear to demonstrate a great deal of congruence across the libraries in both countries. The profile generated during the first stage of the research demonstrated that the libraries share similar historic origins and maintain historic collections, artefacts, and buildings that are considered to have similar cultural value for their communities and for researchers. While it was established that far more of the libraries in the USA offered modern lending collections alongside their historic collections and were also less likely to offer full public access than their counterparts in the UK, this was found to likely be related to differences in the membership criteria of the ILA and MLG.

During the interviews, the participant's beliefs about their institutions' potential contributions to cultural sustainability were found to be closely aligned in both countries, as were their beliefs about the main challenges to achieving sustainability in their institutions and best practices for overcoming these challenges. However, a notable difference was detected in terms of the US libraries having more established mechanisms for encouraging giving from major donors. While there was evidence that effort had been made by some of the UK libraries to establish similar mechanisms, it was clear that such donations were considered a far more reliable and regular source of funding in the USA rather than in the UK.

A summary of the main similarities and differences between the libraries in each country is provided in Table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6 Summary of the main similarities and differences between independent libraries in the UK and USA

	Similarities	Differences
Profile of the libraries and their cultural heritage assets	- Similarities in origins and overall aims of ILA and MLG - Shared belief in preserving 'traditional library experience' and promoting historic origins - Similarities in strengths of historic collections and archives - Increasing public access to collections - Maintain historic buildings - Similarities in focus of cultural events - Increasing public access to events	- MLG libraries more likely to provide modern lending collections - MLG libraries less likely to exist in original buildings - Full public access more common in ILA libraries
Contributions to Cultural Sustainability	- Heritage Preservation considered greatest strength, Cultural Diversity considered a weakness - Similar beliefs in need to increase Cultural Vitality and Cultural Diversity, and recognition that this may conflict with preservation of heritage and traditions - Similar belief in need to preserve organisational identity and recognition that sector is simultaneously facing an 'identity crisis'	
Challenges and best practices to achieving cultural sustainability	- Outdated funding, governance, and staffing structures considered main challenges - Building partnerships and collaborations through 'word of mouth', libraries in both countries felt need to formalise these relationships - Book collections seen as unique asset, but libraries in both countries felt collections were underused - Elitist perceptions of independent libraries - Ageing membership - Lack of awareness of organisations within wider community - Insularity of membership	- MLG libraries more likely to have established mechanisms to encourage giving from major donors, including offering higher benefactor rates

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

Having presented the main research findings in the previous chapter, this chapter will discuss and interpret the findings in relation to the literature. As originally explained in section 2.7 of chapter two, each stage of data collection can be seen to relate to one level of the conceptual model proposed in Figure 2.8. This chapter will look at the data from each of these stages in turn and will consider how the conceptual model has developed understanding of the relationship between independent libraries and cultural sustainability. This will lead to the proposal of the Conceptual Framework for Achieving Cultural Sustainability in Independent Libraries, which along with the Conceptual Model for the Levels of Sustainability in MLAs proposed in chapter two, forms the main contribution to knowledge of this study.

5.1 The cultural heritage assets of independent libraries (development of the 'inner circle' of the model depicted in Figure 2.8)

According to the argument put forward in the literature review, independent libraries and other MLAs exist first and foremost to sustain cultural heritage. The proposed conceptual model places this heritage at the core of the organisation's activities, with the organisation itself existing as a mediator between the heritage that it sustains and the external society or community for which it is being

sustained. Since the preservation of cultural heritage assets is considered key to enabling cultural sustainability to be possible, it is further argued that developing an in-depth understanding of the heritage maintained by different kinds of MLAs is paramount to being able to not only understand the unique nature of their potential contributions to cultural sustainability, but also for being able to provide suggestions for improving these contributions at a practical, organisational level.

One of the criticisms put forward in relation to the cultural sustainability indicators suggested by Adams (2010) and Pop and Borza (2016a) was that they do not consider the heritage maintained by organisations beyond the basic assumption that it consists of collections of physical cultural artefacts. These indicators are thereby limited to providing basic suggestions for improving preservation and conservation practices in MLAs.

While Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014) do distinguish between the 'types' of heritage maintained by the museums in their study (for example, 'Byzantine', 'Natural History', 'Archaeology' (p.575)), the focus of the study is on how the 'legal status' of the museums as either 'State', 'Municipal/Community' or 'Private' institutions affects their contributions to cultural sustainability. No further consideration of the nature of the heritage maintained by the different institutions, or how it feeds into their overall contributions to cultural sustainability, is made.

By providing a comprehensive account of the cultural assets maintained by independent libraries, the profile developed from the analysis of the libraries'

websites sought to develop understanding of the nature of the heritage maintained by the sector. This would thereby enable the collection of data related to understanding and improving the contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability to be grounded in a more in-depth understanding of the heritage itself.

As posited in the summary of the findings in section 4.3, the profile developed highlighted two key points about the nature of the heritage maintained by independent libraries: that it includes what can be described as both tangible and intangible heritage, and that it includes organisational heritage as well as community heritage. Figure 5.1 illustrates how the identification of these different forms of heritage elaborates on the notion of the heritage maintained by MLAs employed in previous research related to their contributions to cultural sustainability.

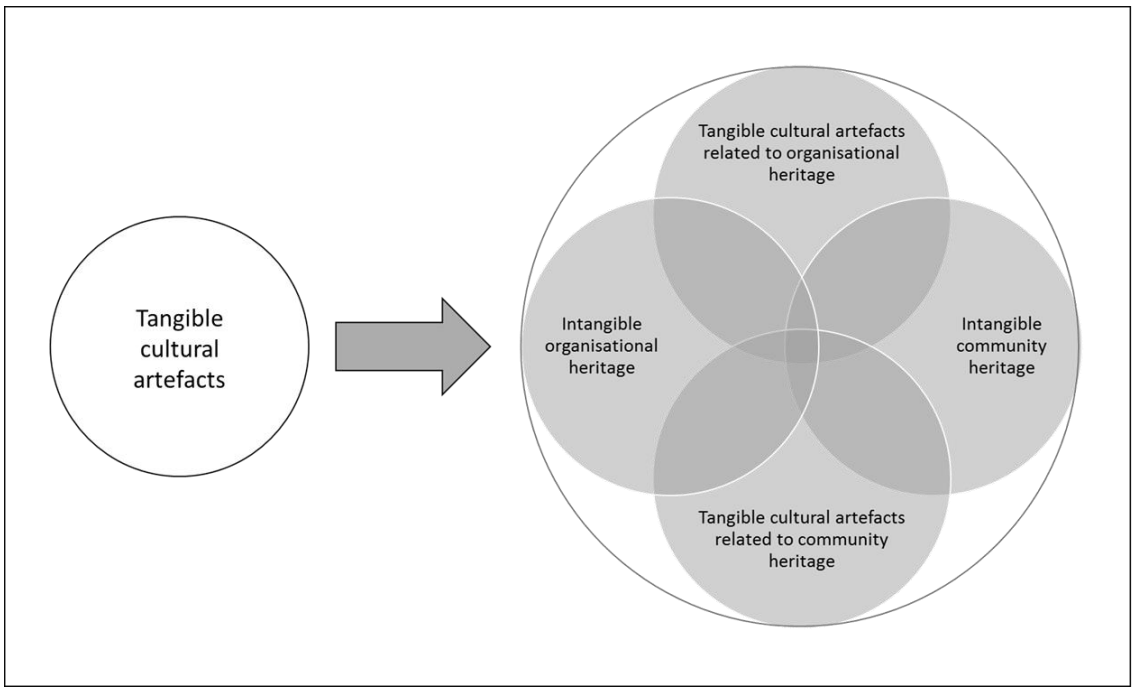

Figure 5.1 How the notion of heritage sustained by MLAs was developed in the context of independent libraries

The identification of the intangible heritage that exists within independent libraries is in line with wider conceptual work on cultural sustainability, which suggests that cultural heritage includes what UNESCO (2013) describes as 'both tangible forms of cultural heritage, such as buildings, monuments, books, and work of art; and intangible cultural heritage, such as folklore, traditions and languages'. Its inclusion as a core part of the heritage that independent libraries exist to sustain thereby provides the opportunity for greater recognition of the role that organisations play in sustaining intangible heritage. In addition, it provides the opportunity for the development of indicators for improving the preservation of this other 'form' of heritage in independent libraries alongside the physical conservation measures proposed for tangible cultural heritage.

While the organisational heritage and community heritage maintained by independent libraries cannot be considered discrete forms of heritage (as depicted by the Venn diagram and further explained in section 4.3), the emphasis placed on preserving and upholding organisational heritage would seem to indicate that it is recognised across the sector as a unique aspect of the heritage that they maintain. This would suggest that, at least in the context of independent libraries, organisations do not consider themselves to exist solely as repositories for heritage related to their wider communities, but also as custodians of their own organisational heritage. The relationship between independent libraries and the heritage they sustain would therefore appear to be more complex than the simple mediation between the community and its heritage proposed in the original conceptual model depicted in Figure 2.8.

The importance of organisational heritage, and how it can be seen to affect the contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability, will be explored in greater detail in sections 5.2 and 5.3.

5.2 The potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability (development of the 'outer circle' of the conceptual model depicted in Figure 2.8)

The focus of the first stage of the interviews was on gaining insight into the perspectives of practitioners on the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability. As argued in the literature review, previous MLA sustainability policy and research has tended to take a top-down approach, using categories derived from broader sustainable development goals with little

consideration of their relevance at practice level. As a result, this has been shown to lead to difficulties in organisations incorporating it into 'their work and planning' (Museums Association, 2009:5).

Indeed, while the parameters proposed by Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014) for assessing the contributions of museums to cultural sustainability provide the most comprehensive means by which to assess the role that MLAs play in cultural sustainability to date, the development of these parameters was based entirely on 'the broad discussions of culture as a fourth pillar of sustainable development' (p.569). No attempt was made to include practitioners' perspectives on the role of their organisations in cultural sustainability despite the fact that such perspectives could be beneficial in the development of sustainability strategies for MLAs that have more relevance at practice level.

Based upon the four parameters of cultural sustainability derived from Stylianou-Lambert (2014) and Soini and Birkeland (2014) depicted in Figure 3.2, the data collected during the first stage of the interviews initially sought to gain insights into how practitioners felt their organisations contributed to cultural sustainability according to these parameters and which they considered to be their strongest and weakest areas. However, the data collected suggested that the way practitioners viewed their contributions to cultural sustainability was far more complex than that of an organisation contributing to externally set objectives.

For example, in addition to being considered the strongest contribution of independent libraries to cultural sustainability, the participants expressed the

fundamental importance of heritage preservation to the existence of the libraries and all of their activities. This supports the argument outlined in chapter two that the heritage preserved by MLAs is more than just an externally set objective in the cultural sustainability dimension and should be regarded as being integral to the sustainability of the organisations themselves. This provides validation for placing heritage at the centre of the conceptual model.

Meanwhile, the participants' elaborations on the role of their organisations in Heritage Preservation and Cultural Identity suggested that the heritage and identity to which they consider their organisations to contribute is not necessarily of a singular nature. Indeed, further to the findings from the first stage of the research, participants considered their work in the area of heritage preservation to not just relate to the preservation of community heritage, but also their own organisational heritage. The fact that the more intangible aspects of this heritage were discussed in relation to their role in promoting Cultural Identity highlighted the ongoing nature of this heritage and how, alongside their local community's identity, their organisational identity is also an important aspect of the Cultural Identity that they exist to promote.

The way that participants discussed the different categories in relation to each other also suggested that there are perhaps more complex relationships between the different parameters of cultural sustainability than can be perceived when they are considered as discrete categories to which institutions can contribute. For example, the crossover that occurred between the discussion of the areas of Heritage Preservation and Cultural Identity would suggest that they

are closely interlinked in independent libraries, with the preservation of community and organisational heritage supporting the promotion of the community and organisation's identity and the promotion of these identities simultaneously providing incentive to preserve their related heritage. Similarly, a supportive relationship can also be seen to exist between the dimensions of Cultural Vitality and Cultural Diversity, with the provision of a more vital programme of events attracting more diverse audiences, and more diverse audiences simultaneously stimulating the development of a more vital programme of events.

Some participants also discussed the possibility of conflict arising between the work that they do towards these different dimensions. Indeed, while Cultural Vitality was considered to be beneficial to increasing the sustainability of their institutions by bringing in revenue and thereby enabling them to continue to fulfil their work in the less lucrative area of Heritage Preservation, it was also considered to have the potential to conflict with some of their work in preserving both the physical and intangible organisational heritage in their care. Similarly, having been identified as a weakness across the sector, increasing Cultural Diversity was also considered crucial to the sustainability of the libraries. However, the changes that were considered necessary to attract more diverse audiences could also be considered to have a negative impact on the preservation of the traditional subscription library heritage and identity that they exist to sustain.

In light of the way that participants discussed the different parameters, it is possible to consider the practitioners' perspectives of their institution's contributions to cultural sustainability as being divided into two categories: what independent libraries exist to sustain, and what makes independent libraries sustainable. For example, Heritage Preservation and Cultural Identity were discussed by participants as things that they exist to sustain, where as their work with regards to Cultural Vitality and Cultural Diversity were considered as things that make their institutions more sustainable. Since there is potential for conflict between these parameters careful management of an organisation's contributions to each area would seem necessary, especially should an organisation wish to strengthen its contributions to a particular parameter without causing detriment to their contributions to other parameters.

To summarise, the insights provided by the participants can be seen to elaborate on the conceptualisation of Cultural Sustainability in MLAs provided by Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014) in these key ways:

- The importance of their organisation's contributions to each of the four areas were not viewed equally as Heritage Preservation was considered fundamental to the work of organisations in all other aspects of cultural sustainability (In Figure 5.2 below, this is depicted through the enlargement of the Heritage Preservation dimension)
- Participants had complex understandings of their organisations' contributions to some of the individual parameters of cultural sustainability. In particular, participants considered their contributions to

Heritage Preservation and Cultural Identity to involve efforts to sustain and promote the culture of both the local community and the organisation itself (depicted through the addition of subcategories to the dimensions of Heritage Preservation and Cultural Identity in Figure 5.2)

- Participants considered the parameters of Heritage Preservation and Cultural Identity as things that independent libraries exist to sustain, while the parameters of Cultural Vitality and Cultural Diversity were considered as things that can make independent libraries more sustainable (depicted by the labels added beside the top and bottom dimensions in Figure 5.2)
- Participants highlighted the existence of relationships between the different parameters that could be both supportive and the cause of conflict (Depicted by the arrows added between the different parameters in Figure 5.2)
- From the participants' discussion of the relationships between the different parameters, the main barrier to achieving successful contributions to all four areas of cultural sustainability would seem to exist between the parameters that they consider themselves to exist to sustain (Heritage Preservation and Cultural Identity) and the parameters that they consider make independent libraries more sustainable (Cultural Vitality and Cultural Diversity) (depicted by the addition of the line through the centre of Figure 5.2).

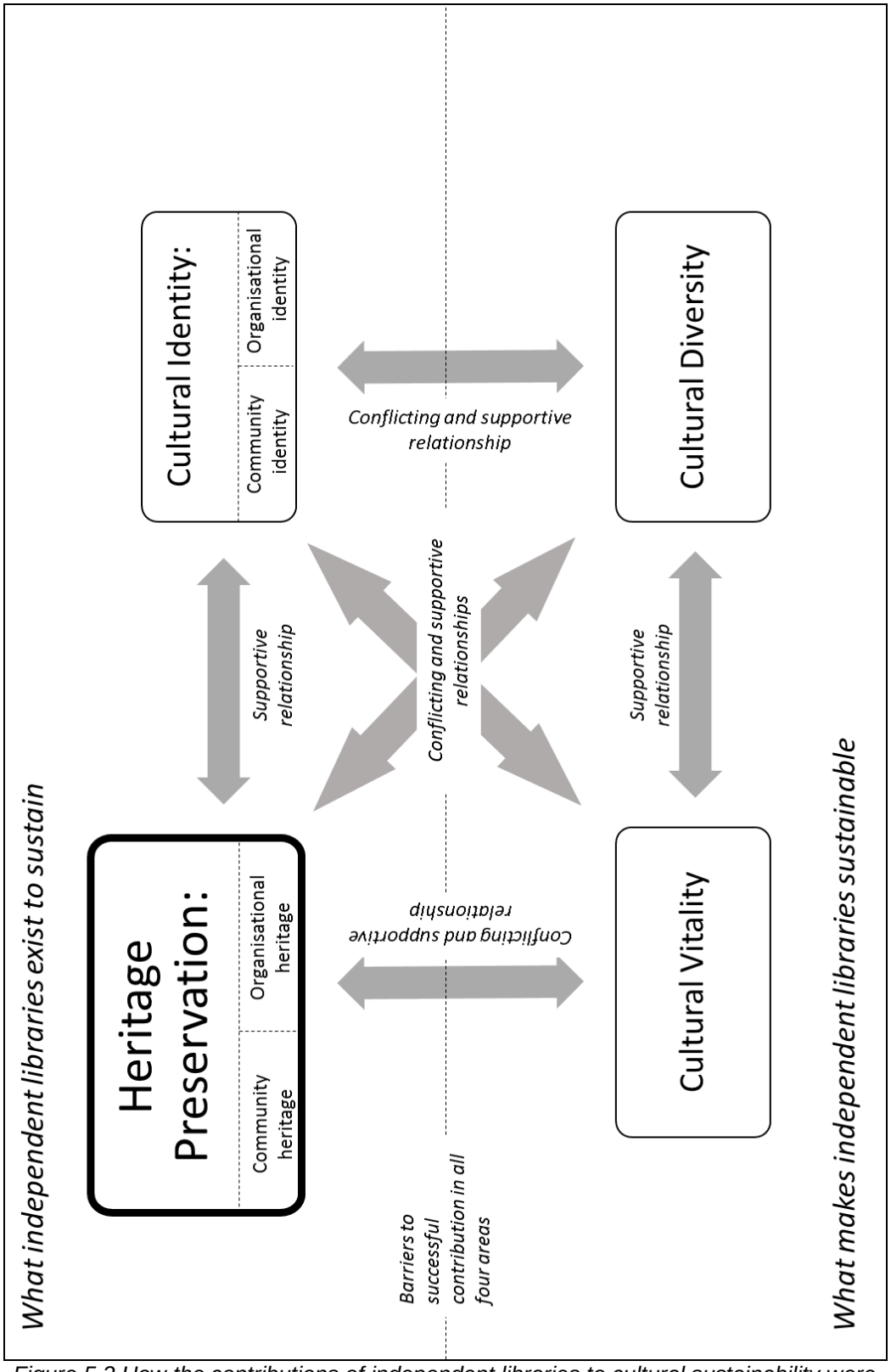

Figure 5.2 How the contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability were perceived by practitioners

5.3 Achieving internal organisational sustainability in independent libraries (development of the 'middle circle' of the conceptual model depicted in Figure 2.8)

The aim of the second stage of the interviews was to gain insight into the main challenges and best practices to achieving sustainability in independent libraries at an organisational level. As argued in the literature review, previous research that considers the role of MLAs in cultural sustainability has focused on developing external cultural policy (Stylianou-Lambert et al, 2014) or on developing indicators related to preservation and conservation practices (Adams, 2010, Pop and Borza, 2016a). Taking the perspective proposed in the conceptual model that MLAs function as mediators between the heritage that they sustain and external sustainability goals, this stage of the data collection sought to provide a more holistic consideration of the factors that affect an organisation's ability to fulfil this mediating role and successfully contribute to cultural sustainability.

Newman's (2010:3) framework for 'assessing the likely sustainability of community archives' was identified as the most holistic method of considering the internal sustainability of organisations in the body of previous MLA sustainability research. Organisational factors derived from this framework were therefore employed to guide the development of a holistic perspective on the challenges and best practices to achieving sustainability in independent libraries. The characteristics Newman identified as likely to indicate the sustainability of community archives shared some commonalities with the

challenges and best practices identified during this study of independent libraries. This is unsurprising as both studies are concerned with the sustainability of collections-based organisations.

For example, in relation to the organisational factors of Staffing and Governance, Newman (2010:62) determines archives that have 'No staff with education or experience to carry out professional tasks' or that have 'no long-term commitment' from their governing bodies as being less likely to be sustainable than archives that have staff who are 'qualified through education or experience to carry out professional tasks' or that have a governing body with a 'clear and ongoing commitment' to the archives. Participants in this study similarly deemed the most significant challenges in relation to staffing and governance in independent libraries to include the fact that they lack staff with professional marketing and fundraising experience, and the lack of continuity in the governance of the libraries.

The best practices identified for overcoming these challenges can also be seen to have the overall effect of bringing the libraries' own characteristics in closer alignment with the characteristics of sustainable community archives identified by Newman. For example, the development of new staffing structures in independent libraries that include roles for dedicated marketing and fundraising staff can be seen to align with Newman's (2010:62) theory that sustainable archives are likely to have staff who are 'qualified through education or experience to carry out professional tasks', while changes to election rules which intend to provide greater continuity in the governance of the libraries can

be seen to align with Newman's theory that sustainable archives require a 'clear and ongoing commitment' from their governing bodies.

It is possible to find further parallels between the findings from this study and the characteristics of sustainable and unsustainable archives from Newman's (2010) study in relation to each of the organisational factors that were examined. However, in considering the challenges and best practices to achieving sustainability in independent libraries in relation to each of the organisational factors, the data collected during this stage of the study offers more than a surface level comparison of the characteristics of sustainable and unsustainable organisations. It also provides the opportunity to consider the underlying causes that lead to the development of unsustainable characteristics and the actions that are necessary to enable the adoption of more sustainable characteristics in their place.

For example, the main challenges related to the areas of Staffing and Governance were considered to stem from the continued use of traditional structures that had become outdated and were no longer suitable to support the organisation's activities. This was also the cause of the main challenge detected in relation to External Support, as the traditional staffing structures employed were unable to provide the necessary staff to apply for external financial support or foster lasting collaborative relationships with other organisations. The continued use of traditional funding strategies and collection policies were believed to be the cause of some of the main challenges in relation to the organisational factors of Funding and Collections, while persisting perceptions

of independent libraries as exclusive organisations was identified as one of the main causes of the challenges in relation to the organisational factor of Community and Users.

The best practices for overcoming the challenges in relation to each organisational factor can be seen to require changes to take place at a similarly fundamental level. These changes include modernising governance and staffing structures, adopting new funding strategies and collection policies, and replacing perceptions of independent libraries as exclusive organisations with a more inclusive and accessible interpretation of the libraries.

Table 5.1 provides a summary of the underlying causes of the main challenges to achieving sustainability in independent libraries and the changes necessary to achieve sustainability in relation to each of the organisational factors. According to this interpretation of the findings, it is possible to perceive unsustainable independent libraries as those that value tradition, continuity, and exclusivity, and sustainable independent libraries as those that relinquish these values in favour of modernisation, innovation, and inclusivity.

Table 5.1 The underlying causes of independent libraries becoming unsustainable institutions and the changes necessary to increase their sustainability

Factors explored in relation to the internal sustainability of independent libraries	Underlying causes of the main challenges to achieving sustainability in independent libraries	Changes required to achieve sustainability in independent libraries
Governance	Traditional structures	Modernisation of governance structures
Staffing	Traditional structures	Modernisation of staffing structures
Funding	Reliance on traditional strategies	Innovation in funding strategies
Collections	Continuity of traditional collection policies	Innovation in collection policies
External Support	Lack of collaboration and external financial support (stemming from limitations of traditional staffing structure)	Increased collaboration and external financial support (enabled by modernised staffing structure)
Community and Users	Perceptions of exclusivity leading to insularity	Reinterpretation as inclusive and accessible institutions

Just as Hawkes (2001) suggests that cultural change is fundamental to enabling society to adopt more sustainable modes of living necessary for its survival, so a fundamental change in the 'traditions, values, policies, beliefs, and attitudes' (Mullins, 2007:721) that constitute an organisation's culture would appear necessary for the survival of independent libraries. The findings from this stage of the research would therefore appear to confirm the need for MLA sustainability models to include a consideration of how the organisation's internal culture affects their sustainability.

However, changing organisational culture in independent libraries is further complicated by the fact that, as is evident in the discussion in sections

5.1 and 5.2, the organisational heritage and identity that they sustain is considered an important part of their unique cultural value. A complete overhaul in organisational values could therefore jeopardise the cultural value of the libraries, particularly as it is considered to largely be transmitted through the upholding of subscription library traditions.

If independent libraries are to successfully manage the organisational change necessary to ensure their future survival alongside their commitment to sustaining their organisational heritage and identity, it is essential that their sustainability strategies include recognition of these somewhat conflicting priorities.

5.3.1 Competing values framework

A useful method by which to consider conflicting priorities within organisations is the Competing Values Framework (CVF). The CVF was originally developed as a method by which to consider organisational effectiveness. The CVF 'captures the fundamental values' or 'culture' that 'exists in organisations' and is based on the theory that organisational cultures consist of a series of often contradictory perspectives and values that must be carefully balanced and reconciled with each other if an organisation is to be effective (Cameron, 2013).

The generic nature of the CVF has meant that it has been used to explore the management of competing values in a range of different organisational contexts, including organisations within the MLA sectors

(Chidambaranathan, K. and Regha, V.S. (2016); Chidambaranathan, K. and Swarooprani, B.S. (2017); Davies et al, 2013; Kaarst-Brown et al, 2004; Shepstone, C. and Currie, E., 2008). Of particular relevance to understanding the situation in independent libraries is the Museum Values Framework proposed by Davies et al (2013) which, as an adapted version of the CVF, can be used to identify 'various sets of values' found specifically within 'a museum context', helping to 'increase the visibility of different priorities' and 'contribute to our understanding of the tensions facing museum managers' (p.345).

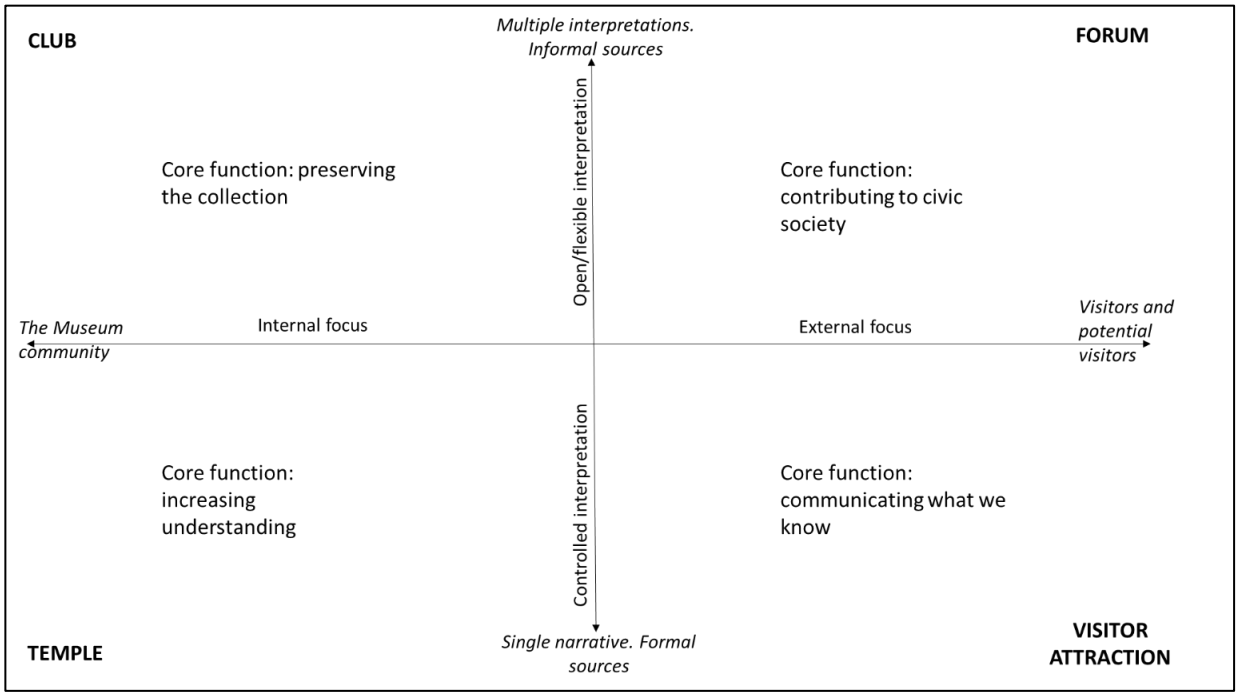

Figure 5.3 A simplified version of the Museum Values Framework adapted from Davies et al (2013)

The Museum Values Framework is based on the assumption that there are three areas where values play a significant role in shaping the nature of a museum and its exhibitions. These include who the museum's key audience and stakeholders are perceived to be, how knowledge about the collections and the role of the museum in presenting that knowledge is conceptualised, and the beliefs about the overall function of the museum (Davies et al, 2013).

In the MVF (Figure 5.3), the horizontal axis is concerned with perceptions regarding the museum's audience and stakeholders. It is specifically concerned with 'where the museum seeks validation'. Museums on the left-hand side of the spectrum look to 'insiders, such as fellow museum professionals, enthusiasts and other experts', while museums on the right-hand side of the spectrum tend to focus on 'an external audience' of 'primarily visitors and potential visitors' (Davies et al, 2013:348-349). The vertical axis is meanwhile concerned with how knowledge about the collections is conceptualised and whether the museum takes the perspective at the base of the axis that 'meanings are fixed' and that they should simply 'present agreed facts…based on information from formal sources', or whether it takes the perspective at the opposite end of the axis that 'meaning is fluid and dependent on context' and that 'multiple narratives' and 'interpretations' including those based on 'informal sources' are 'equally valid' (Davies et al:349-350).

Different beliefs about the core functions of museums can then be found within each of the quadrants of the MVF. Based on 'themes that recur in the literature', these include 'preserving the collection', 'increasing understanding' of

the collections through study and research, ‘communicating’ what is known about the collections through exhibitions and other events, and ‘contributing to civic society’ by using the collections as a means to improve individual wellbeing and social cohesion (Davies et al: 350-351).

According to its position in relation to the axes, each quadrant of the MVF is representative of a different museum environment that prioritises different functions, different audiences and stakeholders, and different beliefs about the conceptualisation of knowledge related to its collections. These four different kinds of museum are categorised by Davies et al (2013:351) as either a ‘Club’, ‘Temple’, ‘Visitor Attraction’, or ‘Forum’. Table 5.2 provides an overview of some of the characteristics associated with each type of museum, together with some of the possible positive and negative effects of their individual attributes.

Table 5.2 Overview of some of the characteristics of each of the four kinds of museum proposed by Davies et al (2013:351-354)

CLUB:	**TEMPLE:**
• 'primarily concerned with members of the club' • 'priority is to secure and preserve' collections • Visitors 'seen as potential converts to the cause' • Can act as a 'virtuous circle, with visitors' and members' needs being well provided for by like-minded individuals' • Can be 'inward-looking' and 'self-serving', becoming 'difficult to join' and unwelcoming to the 'uninitiated' • Can 'run into financial difficulties if the club members are unable to cover costs from their own resources'	• Shares 'some of the inward-looking aspects of the club, but the peer group differs', with approval being sought from 'acknowledged experts' such as 'other museum professionals' and academics • Priority is placed on studying the collection • Can 'expand our collective knowledge and create beautiful and inspirational public spaces' • May be 'detached' from the 'bulk of society by focusing on a very narrow audience' and may become 'elitist' • 'exclusivity' can be beneficial in helping to 'elicit financial support from…wealthy patrons' but can 'make it difficult for the museum to demonstrate public benefit and…justify public funding'
VISITOR ATTRACTION:	**FORUM:**
• Visitors' needs are prioritised • Visitors are 'seen as clients whose needs must be carefully researched and satisfied' • 'the museum is driven by market forces and values productivity and efficiency' • Shares 'many of the values of commercial businesses' but uses 'financial surplus' to 'support the museum's other functions' • Can result in 'a thriving, customer-focused museum' • However, it can 'also be argued that aiming for mass popularity can result in criticisms of "dumbing down" or "Disneyfying" the museum'	• Like the visitor attraction, is also focused on external audiences, but 'the ideological forces which inform' its operations 'are markedly different' • Priority is 'to benefit society and individual well-being' by 'encouraging debate', 'helping visitors understand their place in the world', and 'increasing social cohesion' • Visitors are 'encouraged to get involved in creating meaning from the collections' • The museum 'can be a place for debate, contestation and even partisan agitation' • Have been criticised 'for turning the museum into a social experiment for political ends'

As Davies et al (2013:354) state, the four kinds of museum are ‘conceptual abstracts’ and do not ‘exist in their pure form’. It is not in fact possible to categorise actual museums according to one of the four museum types, as in reality they tend to combine characteristics associated with each ‘in various ways’ with ‘the combinations’ changing ‘over time’ (p.354). Rather than providing examples of four specific kinds of museum, each of the four quadrants of the model are representative of different ‘modes’ of operating within a museum environment. By identifying which characteristics tend to be emphasised by a particular museum, it is possible to use the framework to ‘analyse behaviour’ within the organisation and consider any ‘tensions’ that may exist (p.354).

The MVF was developed by Davies et al (2013) with the intention of explaining ‘patterns of coproduction in exhibition making’ within museums (p.355). However, owing to a number of parallels that can be drawn between the museum environments that it describes and independent libraries, it can also be beneficial for helping to understand the conflicting priorities and values that exist in independent libraries.

For example, the internal focus of the ‘Club’ and ‘Temple’ modes on the museum community and their prioritisation of heritage preservation and maintaining the formalities of a traditional museum environment can be seen to closely resemble the membership focused nature of independent libraries and their emphasis on preserving heritage and upholding the formal structures and procedures of a traditional library environment. The negative repercussions that

this can have by causing institutions to become unwelcoming, 'difficult to join', and 'elitist' (Davies et al, 2013:352) can be seen to reflect the concerns identified by participants in independent libraries regarding how beliefs about the exclusivity of the libraries can lead to them becoming increasingly insular institutions that struggle to attract new members. Furthermore, the reliance of museums operating in the 'Club' and 'Temple' modes on internal funding from their 'members' (p.352) and 'wealthy patrons' (p.353) and how this can lead to financial difficulties and problems in attracting public funding also bears similarity to the issues that independent libraries face in relation to their reliance on the three traditional forms of funding that are all internally managed by the libraries themselves.

The characteristics considered to make independent libraries unsustainable would therefore appear to be grounded in the priorities and values associated with the 'Club' and 'Temple' modes. The external focus of the 'Forum' and 'Visitor Attraction' modes can meanwhile be seen to embody many of the characteristics considered necessary for independent libraries to become more sustainable. The emphasis of the 'Visitor Attraction' mode on allowing the needs of visitors and 'market forces' (Davies et al, 2013:353) to drive the organisation's development can be seen to embody the need for independent libraries to become more commercially minded and more aware of the needs of potential markets beyond their traditional user base (Cultural Vitality). The emphasis of the 'Forum' mode on participation and fostering a sense of shared community ownership of the collections would seem to embody the inclusivity

and accessibility felt necessary to ensure the relevance of independent libraries to a wider community (Cultural Diversity).

To become sustainable, this would suggest that independent libraries need to adopt characteristics that are more typically associated with the externally focused 'Forum' and 'Visitor Attraction' modes. However, the underlying assumption of the MVF and indeed any version of the CVF is that the effective management of organisations does not require a radical shift from one mode of operating to another but rather the careful management of 'the interrelationships, congruencies, and contradictions' that exist between the four different modes identified in the framework (Cameron, 2013). Indeed, since the functions prioritised by each quadrant of the framework can be considered of equal importance to the organisation's overall success, a radical change from one mode of operating to another in independent libraries could prove damaging, particularly as their emphasis on heritage preservation and upholding a traditional library environment has so far been crucial to enabling the libraries to remain 'beautiful and inspirational' spaces (Davies et al, 2013:352) and thereby retain what is perceived as their unique cultural value.

The broader environment in which the libraries exist can also be expected to have considerable impact on the extent to which certain modes of operating can be beneficial to their organisations. For example, the apparent success of the independent libraries in the USA in gaining funding through offering higher benefactor rates and receiving substantial private donations would suggest that maintaining more of an internal focus and sense of

‘exclusivity’ in their organisations in order to ‘elicit financial support’ from ‘wealthy patrons’ may in fact be more financially beneficial than adopting an external focus in order to ‘demonstrate public benefit’ and ‘justify public funding’ (Davies et al, 2013:353). Meanwhile, since the libraries in the ILA appear to struggle to gain funding by such means, increasing public access may well be more beneficial to independent libraries in the UK.

Consideration also needs to be given to the individual circumstances of the libraries. For some independent libraries a shift towards the ‘Forum’ and ‘Visitor attraction’ modes of operating could in fact be perceived as offering the opportunity to realign their modes of operating with their original priorities and values. Indeed, the focus of the ‘Forum’ mode on contributing to civic society and ‘encouraging debate’ (Davies et al, 2013:353) would appear to be particularly relevant to independent libraries that have origins as mechanics’ institutes or endowed public libraries. This was confirmed by USA6, who described how during its ‘first hundred years’ their ‘Mechanics’ Institute was the place to explore civic and social and cultural issues’. It is also possible to perceive the adoption of more commercial modes of operating associated with the ‘Visitor Attraction’ mode as a continuation of the values of the ‘canny’ (UK9) founders of subscription libraries and Mechanics’ institutes who had the foresight to build shops and offices into their buildings that could provide rental income to help cover their operating costs and ensure their continued survival.

The most effective independent libraries would therefore appear to be those that are attuned to the conflicting priorities and values within their

organisation and are able to successfully balance them according to an astute understanding of the organisation's heritage and the broader environment in which they are currently operating. This process would appear to be embodied by the positive descriptions of leadership figures in independent libraries who have successfully integrated practices based on a more outward looking perspective into their organisations without 'upsetting the original membership' (UK9) and who have managed to provide a new 'vision' (USA4) for their libraries that successfully reinterprets their organisation's heritage and gives it new relevance to audiences today.

5.4 Conceptual Framework For Achieving Cultural Sustainability in Independent Libraries

The previous section has examined how the MVF proposed by Davies et al (2013) can provide a valuable tool by which to explore the organisational culture in independent libraries and consider how the conflicting priorities and values underlying the challenges and best practices to achieving sustainability can most effectively be managed. According to the arguments set out in section 2.7, understanding how the internal culture of organisations affects their sustainability is crucial to ensuring they can successfully fulfil their mediating role between the heritage that they sustain and external cultural sustainability goals.

Interpreting the data regarding the internal sustainability of independent libraries according to the MVF also offers the opportunity to draw more immediate links between the internal organisational culture of the libraries and

their potential contributions to cultural sustainability as were discussed in section 5.2. For example, the tendency for independent libraries to operate according to the 'Club' and 'Temple' modes which prioritise heritage preservation and upholding organisational structures and procedures can explain why Heritage Preservation and Cultural Identity were considered the strongest and most important contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability, particularly when that heritage and identity is perceived as being connected to the organisation rather than the wider local community. Adoption of the external focus of the 'Forum' and 'Visitor Attraction' modes and their respective priorities related to contributing to 'civic society' and 'communicating' with broader audiences (Davies et al, 2013:353) would meanwhile appear to offer the opportunity for independent libraries to improve their contributions to Cultural Diversity and Cultural Vitality.

It is upon this basis that the Conceptual Framework for Achieving Cultural Sustainability in Independent Libraries (Figure 5.4) is proposed. Aligning the parameters of cultural sustainability outlined in Figure 5.2 with the four quadrants of the MVF framework devised by Davies et al (2013), it highlights how the priorities and values associated with the 'Club', 'Temple, 'Forum' and 'Visitor Attraction' modes are supportive of contributions to particular parameters of cultural sustainability. In addition, it demonstrates how the internal focus of the 'Club' and 'Temple' modes, which support the preservation of the heritage and identities of the libraries ('What independent libraries exist to sustain') can often be in conflict with the external focus of the 'Forum' and 'Visitor Attraction'

modes, which are supportive of cultural diversity and cultural vitality ('What makes independent libraries sustainable'). The framework thereby provides a tool by which to consider how these conflicting priorities must be carefully balanced not only to ensure the sustainability of the libraries themselves, but also to ensure the sustainability of their heritage and their successful contribution to all four parameters of cultural sustainability.

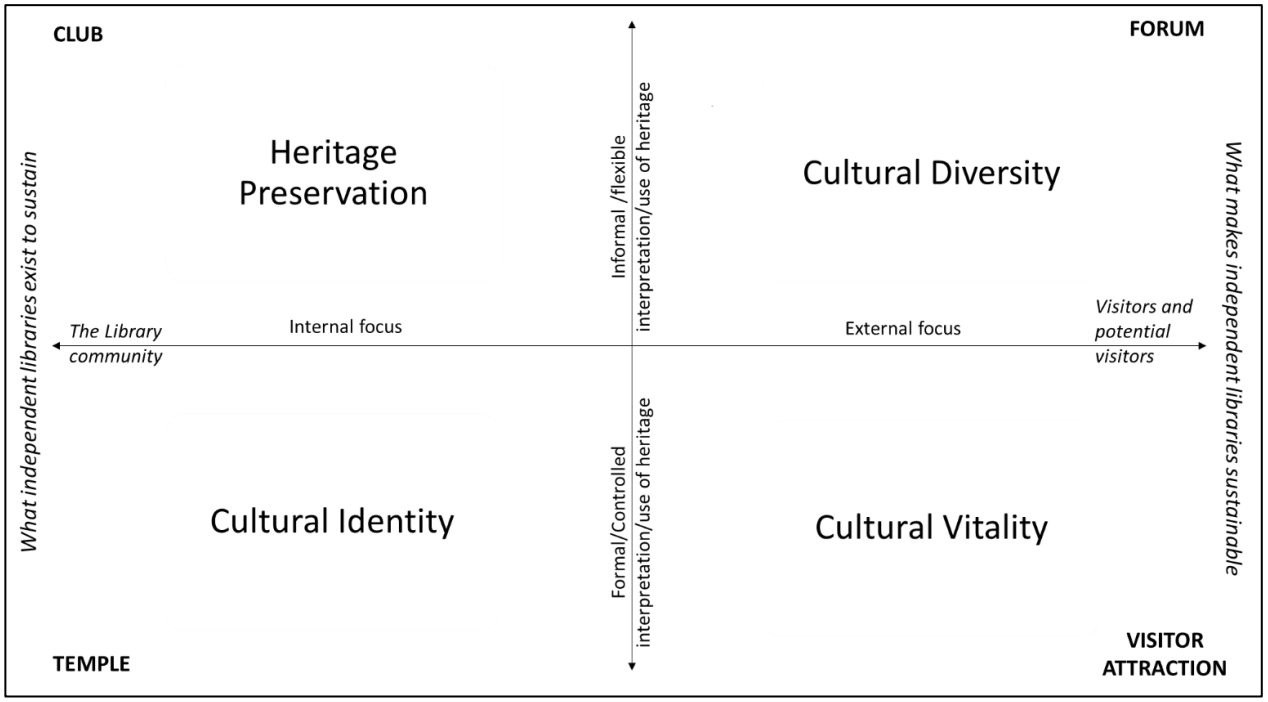

Figure 5.4 Conceptual Framework for Achieving Cultural Sustainability in Independent Libraries

CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusion of the study. First, it explains how the research aim and research objectives have been achieved. This is followed by the articulation of the study's original contribution to knowledge and a discussion of the limitations of the research. The chapter then concludes by offering recommendations for practice and future research, thus fulfilling the fifth and final objective of the study.

6.1 Research aim and objectives

As explained in the introduction to this thesis, this study initially set out to explore how heritage could be better sustained in independent libraries. Noting a lack of sustainability research in the independent library sector itself, the remit of the study was extended to consider how the concept of sustainability has been interpreted in MLA research more widely. An initial review of the literature revealed a wealth of policy and research in relation to the economic, environmental, and social sustainability of MLAs. However, it also discovered that such approaches put little emphasis on the role of MLAs in sustaining heritage.

It was subsequently proposed that increasing recognition of the importance of cultural sustainability could provide an opportunity to address this issue. According to this background the overall aim of this study, 'To contribute

to theory and practice in relation to cultural sustainability in museums, libraries, and archives', was established.

In order to achieve this aim the first objective set for the research was 'To provide a critical analysis of how sustainability has been conceptualised in the MLA sectors thus far and propose a conceptual model that embeds cultural sustainability'. Forming part of the literature review process, the analysis demonstrated how the identification of environmental, economic, and social concerns as the 'three pillars' of sustainable development had led to a focus on social, economic, and environmental concerns being adopted in MLA sustainability policy and research. Further exploration of the alleged shortcomings of this approach revealed that the key issue stems from the fact the it considers the work of MLAs in sustaining heritage only according to its instrumental value in contributing to these external sustainability goals, rather than according to its intrinsic cultural value.

The analysis proceeded to consider how the recognition of cultural sustainability as the 'fourth pillar' in sustainable development could provide the opportunity to address this issue. However, the majority of MLA sustainability policy and research was found to continue to focus on the original 'three pillars'. Initial efforts to consider the role of MLAs in cultural sustainability were found to be limited, either developing policy without consideration of practice, or only presenting a narrow perspective of the role of MLAs in sustaining culture based on their role in applying physical preservation and conservation measures to the cultural artefacts in their collections. According to these limitations, it was

argued that more research was required to increase understanding of the role of MLAs in cultural sustainability and how they can improve their contributions at practice level.

The analysis also argued for a more fundamental reconsideration of the way that sustainability has been conceptualised in MLA sustainability policy and research. This included the need to make a distinction between internal and external sustainability concerns and the need for the survival of the organisation's heritage to form the primary focus of all sustainability initiatives. According to these arguments, the Conceptual Model for the Levels of Sustainability in MLAs (Figure 2.7) was proposed.

With the first objective completed, in order to continue in its 'contribution to theory and practice in relation to cultural sustainability in museums, libraries, and archives', the study proceeded to employ the conceptual model to guide the collection of empirical data. Returning to the original research context of independent libraries, the study intended to elaborate on the conceptual model by collecting data related to the three levels that it depicts. For this purpose, objectives two, three, and four were established.

Objective two, 'To profile independent libraries and their cultural heritage assets in order to provide the baseline for the study and develop understanding of their perceived cultural value', sought to provide further understanding of the nature of the heritage at the core of the model. Objective three, 'To establish understanding of the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability', sought to provide data to elaborate on the outer circle of the

model. Lastly, objective four, ‘To consider the challenges to achieving sustainability in independent libraries at an organisational level and offer examples of best practice for overcoming these challenges’, sought to provide data to elaborate on the middle circle of the model related to organisational sustainability.

A research strategy was established according to these objectives. Employing two stages of data collection, an initial survey of the websites of independent libraries provided a comprehensive account of the heritage maintained by independent libraries in the UK and USA. Interviews conducted with professionals from independent libraries in both countries provided insight into their perspectives on the contributions of their organisations to cultural sustainability, as well as the challenges to and best practices for achieving sustainability at an organisational level.

The collection of this data saw the completion of objectives two, three, and four. However, to be able to fulfil the overall aim of the study further examination of this data was required. As reported in the previous chapter, this process required the researcher to reflect on how the conceptual model depicted in Figure 2.7 had enabled understanding of the role of independent libraries and other MLAs in cultural sustainability to be taken forward.

The data collected in relation to each level of the conceptual model was analysed in turn to determine how it had developed understanding of its particular focus from the previous research. Data related to the inner circle of the conceptual model sought to establish an in-depth understanding of the

heritage maintained by independent libraries and resulted in the development of four key categories: ‘Tangible cultural artefacts related to organisational heritage’, ‘Tangible cultural artefacts related to community heritage’, ‘Intangible organisational heritage’, and ‘Intangible community heritage’.

This elaborated on the perspective employed by previous MLA sustainability models that view the heritage maintained by organisations as consisting of collections of physical cultural artefacts. The importance of developing a more in-depth understanding of the heritage maintained by organisations to understand their role in cultural sustainability was confirmed in the later stages of data collection, where it became clear that the tangible and intangible organisational heritage preserved by independent libraries has direct impact on their potential contributions to cultural sustainability and the sustainability of their organisations.

Data related to the outer circle of the conceptual model revealed the intricacies of the relationship between independent libraries and their potential contributions to external cultural sustainability objectives. Following on from the identification of the tangible and intangible organisational heritage preserved by independent libraries, practitioners highlighted how preserving and promoting their organisational heritage and identity was often as important as preserving and promoting community heritage and identity. It was found that efforts to improve contributions to cultural vitality and cultural diversity could conflict with efforts to preserve their organisational heritage and identity. However, since increased cultural vitality and cultural diversity were acknowledged as being

essential to making independent libraries sustainable, it was considered imperative that organisations find means by which to better balance their contributions between the four parameters of cultural sustainability.

Exploring the potential contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability with practitioners in this way considerably enhanced understanding of the complexities that they may face in contributing to external cultural sustainability goals. Further understanding of these complexities and how they could be managed at a practice level was established during the analysis of the data related to the middle circle of the conceptual model. It was found that the challenges to achieving sustainability were related to the tendency for institutions to value traditions, continuity, and exclusivity, while the best practices for overcoming these challenges required these values to be relinquished in favour of modernisation, innovation, and inclusivity.

Identification of the need for a change in organisational values highlighted the importance of the previously unexamined area of internal organisational culture in enabling MLAs to achieve sustainability. Further consideration of the conflicting priorities and values in independent libraries as facilitated by the MVF (Davies et al, 2013) enabled direct links to be drawn between the internal culture of the libraries and the issues that they face in preserving their organisational heritage and identity while also increasing their contributions to cultural vitality and cultural diversity. It was on this basis that the Conceptual Framework for Achieving Cultural Sustainability in Independent Libraries was established. Bringing together the MVF with the insights gained

from practitioners in this study, it provides a tool for independent libraries to assess their organisational culture and how it can support or inhibit the sustainability of their organisations as well as their contributions to the different parameters of cultural sustainability.

Together with the Conceptual Model for the Levels of Sustainability in MLA's, this framework provides the study's main 'contribution to theory and practice in relation to cultural sustainability in MLA's'. The remaining sections of this chapter will provide an evaluation of this contribution together with recommendations for future research and practice which will enable the fifth and final objective of this study to be fulfilled.

6.2 Contribution to knowledge and research limitations

The contributions of this research are twofold. Firstly, based on the critical analysis of existing MLA sustainability models, the Conceptual Model for the Levels of Sustainability provides a new perspective by which to consider the sustainability of MLAs. Placing an emphasis on their role in sustaining heritage, it seeks to address the limitations of previous models which focus on demonstrating the contributions of organisations to external sustainable development agendas by providing the opportunity to analyse the relationships that exist between the heritage that organisations exist to sustain, their organisational sustainability, and their contributions to external sustainability goals.

Secondly, by using the conceptual model to guide the collection of empirical data on cultural sustainability and MLAs, the research has significantly developed understanding of the complexities of the relationship between MLAs and cultural sustainability, which hitherto remained an under-researched area. In particular, the Conceptual Framework for Achieving Cultural Sustainability in Independent Libraries reveals the multi-layered and often conflicting sustainability requirements of MLAs to preserve cultural heritage, ensure the effective management of the internal culture of their organisations, and demonstrate commitment to external cultural sustainability goals.

Conducting the research in the context of independent libraries has considerably enhanced understanding of the sector's cultural value and the issues that must be overcome to ensure the future survival of these libraries and their cultural heritage. However, it also raises concerns about the generalisability of the findings to other MLAs. For example, the conflict that exists between preserving organisational heritage and identity and increasing cultural vitality and cultural diversity in independent libraries may not have as much relevance to other MLAs. Nevertheless, it provides a strong evidence base for advocating further research into the relationship between MLAs and cultural sustainability.

6.3 Recommendations for practice and future research

Having developed the first comprehensive profile of independent libraries in the UK and USA, this study has highlighted the similarities that exist between the

cultural heritage assets maintained by these institutions and the challenges that they face in ensuring their future survival. It is suggested that work to further strengthen the connections between the institutions could have substantial benefit for the sector, not only for the purpose of sharing strategies for overcoming the challenges that they face but also for increasing public awareness of the independent library sector.

It is also suggested that independent libraries make attempts to explicitly scrutinize their organisational culture and how the extent of its 'internal' or 'external' focus may affect the sustainability of their organisations and their heritage. This could be facilitated by the Conceptual Framework for Achieving Cultural Sustainability in Independent Libraries, which can help focus thinking about the organisational culture in independent libraries and how underlying values affect the way that they perceive their heritage and their beliefs about how it should be used.

The framework could also benefit other independent museums, libraries, and archives that may have similar organisational cultures with conflicting 'internal' and 'external' focuses. Further research to test the applicability of the framework to other organisations within the MLA sector could therefore be beneficial, as would research to develop a set of more generic cultural sustainability indicators for managing the internal culture of organisations. These could compliment those that have already been developed related to preservation and conservation practices and could ensure that cultural

sustainability is given more equal treatment alongside environmental, economic, and social sustainability in MLA sustainability strategies.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Table of previous conceptual work and empirical research

Key to sustainability focus: Ex.= focus on demonstrating contributions to external sustainable development goals, Int. = focus on internal organisational sustainability

Author/Date	Title	Location	Type of MLA	Sustainability Focus
Adams, E. (2010)	*Towards sustainability indicators for museums in Australia*	Australia	Museums	Environmental (Ex.) Economic (Int.) Social (Ex.) Cultural (Ex.)
Alcaraz, C. et al (2009)	*Creating sustainable practice in a museum context: adopting service-centricity in non-profit museums*	Australia	Museums	Socio-Economic(Int.)
Azmat, F. et al (2018)	*Arts-based initiatives in museums: Creating value for sustainable development*	Australia	Museums	Environmental (Ex.) Economic (Ex.) Social (Ex.)
Barnes, L. (2012)	*Green buildings as sustainability education tools*	USA	Libraries	Environmental (Ex.)
Beasley, G. and Rosseel, T. (2016)	*Leaning into sustainability at University of Alberta Libraries*	Canada	Libraries	Economic (Int.)
Boyden, L. and Weiner, J. (2000)	*Sustainable libraries: teaching environmental responsibility to communities*	USA	Libraries	Environmental (Ex.)

Campolmi, I. (2013)	*Sustainability in modern art museums: management challenges and cultural policies*	Italy	Museums	Environmental (Ex.) Economic (Ex.) Social (Ex.)
Chowdhury, G. (2014)	*Sustainability of digital libraries: a conceptual model and a research framework*	UK	Libraries (digital)	Sustainable technology for digital collections Economic (Int.) Social (Int.)
Conwill, K. (2014)	*To reap the harvest wonderful:* *on sustainability at the National Museum of African American History and Culture*	USA	Museums	Environmental (Ex.)
De Graaf, T. and Müller, H. (2014)	*Sustainable lighting of museum buildings*	Germany	Museums	Environmental (Ex.)
De Silva, M. and Henderson, J. (2011)	*Sustainability in conservation practice*	UK	Museums	Environmental (Ex.)
Di Pietro, L. et al (2014)	*An Audience-Centric Approach for Museums Sustainability*	Italy	Museums	Socio-Economic (Int.)
Evens, T. and Hauttekeete, L. (2011)	*Challenges of digital preservation for cultural heritage institutions*	Belgium	Archives (digital)	Sustainable technology for digital collections Economic (Int.)
Farreny, R. et al (2012)	*The metabolism of cultural services: energy and water flows in museums*	Spain	Museums	Environmental (Ex.)
Garcia, D. et al (2015)	*Selecting eco-friendly thermal systems for the "Vittoriale Degli Italiani" historic museum building*	Italy	Museums	Environmental (Ex.)
Gustafsson, C. and Ijla, A. (2017)	*Museums: A catalyst for sustainable economic development in Sweden*	Sweden	Museums	Socio-Economic (Ex.)

Gustafsson, C. and Ijla, A. (2017)	*Museums: An incubator for sustainable social development and environmental protection*	Sweden	Museums	Socio-cultural (Ex.) Environmental (Ex.)
Hamilton, V. (2004)	*Sustainability for digital libraries*	UK	Libraries (digital)	Economic (Int.)
Hayton, B. (2010)	*Sustainability and public museums buildings: the UK legislative perspective*	UK	Museums	Environmental (Ex.) Economic(Ex.)
Hebda, R. (2007)	*Museums, climate change and sustainability*	Canada	Museums	Environmental (Ex.)
Jankowska, M. and Marcum, J. (2010)	*Sustainability challenge for academic libraries: planning for the future*	USA	Libraries	Environmental (Ex.) Economic(Int.)
Landers, J. (2005)	*Design of Arkansas museum to emphasise sustainability*	USA	Museums	Environmental (Ex.)
Laws, A. (2014)	*Assessing museums online: the digital heritage sustainability (DHS) framework*	UK	Museums (digital)	Sustainable technology for digital collections
Leskard, M. (2015)	*A sustainable storage solution for the Science Museum Group*	UK	Museums	Environmental (Ex.)
Merriman, N. (2006)	*Museum collections and sustainability*	UK	Museums	Sustainable collection policies
Newman, J. (2010)	*Sustaining community archives*	New Zealand	Archives	Environmental (Int.) Economic(Int.) Social (Int.) Cultural (Int.) *(not framed by SD discourse)*
O'Dwyer, D. (2010)	*The contribution of conservators to sustainability at the National Maritime Museum, UK*	UK	Museums	Environmental (Ex.)
Ping, W. 2014	*Exploring the value and innovative pricing strategy of digital archives*	China	Archives (digital)	Economic (Int.)

Plale, B. et al (2013)	*SEAD virtual archive: building a federation of institutional repositories for long-term data preservation in sustainability science*	Netherlands	Archives (digital)	Sustainable technology for digital collections
Pop, I. and Borza, A. (2014)	*Increasing the sustainability of museums through international strategy*	International	Museums	Economic (Int.)
Pop, I. and Borza, A. (2016a)	*Factors influencing museum sustainability and indicators for museum sustainability measurement*	Romania	Museums	Environmental (Ex.) Economic (Ex./Int.) Social (Ex./Int.) Cultural (Ex.)
Pop, I. and Borza, A. (2016)	*Quality in museums as a way to increase sustainability*	Romania	Museums	Socio-Economic (Int.)
Pop, I.L. et al (2018)	*Sustainable development as a source of competitive advantage: an empirical research study in museums*	Romania	Museums	Environmental (Ex.) Social (Ex.) Economic (Int.)
Virto, N.R. and López, M.F.B (2017)	*How can European museums reach sustainability?*	International	Museums	Socio-Economic (Int.)
Silva, H.E. et al (2016)	*A sequential process to assess and optimize the indoor climate of museums*	Portugal	Museums	Environmental (Ex./Int.) Economic (Int.)
Siu, N. et al (2013)	*New service bonds and customer value in customer relationship management: the case of museum visitors*	Hong Kong	Museums	Socio-Economic (Int.)
Spodick, E. (2016)	*Sustainability – it's everyone's job*	Hong Kong	Museums	Environmental (Ex.)
Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014)	*Museums and cultural sustainability: stakeholders, forces, and cultural policies*	Cyprus	Museums	Cultural (Ex.)
Sutter, G. (2008)	*Promoting sustainability: audience and curatorial perspectives on The Human Factor.*	Canada	Museums	Environmental (Ex.)

Sutter, G. et al (2016)	*Fostering cultures of sustainability through community-engaged museums: the history and re-emergence of ecomuseums in Canada and the USA*	Canada/USA	Museums	Environmental (Ex.)
Tait, E. et al (2013)	*Linking to the past: an analysis of community digital heritage initiatives*	UK	Archives (digital)	Sustainable technology for digital collections
Townsend, A. (2014)	*Environmental sustainability and libraries: facilitating user awareness*	Canada	Libraries	Environmental (Ex.)
Villeneuve, P. (2013)	*Building museum sustainability through visitor-centred exhibition practices*	USA	Museums	Socio-Economic (Int.)
Walters, T. and Skinner, K. (2010)	*Economics, sustainability, and the cooperative model in digital preservation*	USA	Archives	Economic (Int.)
Wolfe, M. (2012)	*Beyond "green buildings: "exploring the effect of Jevons' Paradox on the sustainability of archival practices*	USA	Archives	Environmental (Ex.)
Worts, D. (2016)	*Museums: fostering a culture of "flourishing"*	Canada	Museums	Environmental (Ex.) Economic (Ex.) Social (Ex.)

Appendix 2: Email from the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria

M

Mechanics Institutes Victoria Inc <mivenquiry@live.com.au>

Reply all

Sun 26/07/2015, 08:23

Kirsten Sarah Loach

pdf MIV Libraries 2015.pdf
1 MB

Download Save to OneDrive - MMU

Dear Kirsten,
The results of your research will be of great interest to the MIV. The MIV has about 100 institute members. However the majority of Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria evolved into community halls. Many of them may still have small collections of their original library holdings, but do not function as library services.
There are eight MI libraries that continue to operate as libraries. Six have always been regarded as providing a significant library service - Melbourne Athenaeum, Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute, Berwick Mechanics' Institute & Free Library, Footscray Mechanics' Institute Library, Maldon Athenaeum, Prahran Mechanics' Institute. The Little River Mechanics Hall & Free Library is small, but continues to provide a library service. I am sure all would be pleased to assist you in your research.
I have attached 2 pages from a Directory published by the State Government of Victoria. It provides a brief summary of the libraries, and contact details including websites.
All the best with your research, and we may meet in San Francisco next year. Several of our members hope to attend the conference.
Regards,
[redacted]
Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc.

Appendix 3: Email from the Membership Libraries Group

[redacted]
To: kirsten_loach@yahoo.co.uk

1 Jun 2016 at 23:56

Dear Kirsten,

Here is the part of my reply about who to contact.

Please see the attached PDF of the American Membership Libraries Group (MLG) contacts.

The ED for the [redacted] resigned effective May 1 and they are currently recruiting. I'm sure they will have someone by November.

[redacted] and the [redacted] are not members.

[redacted] can tell you more since he was around for the founding of the MLG 25 years ago.

We'll be having a day long MLG meeting here at the MI on 8 November and many members attend that. You may want to try to piggyback on that.

Appendix 4: Example of data collected through the content analysis of the independent library websites

	F	G	H
1	**Access**	**Subscription/entry fee**	**Collection**
2	Open to all	Free access to library, some admission fees to exhibitions and events	Local and natural history, guidebooks to the Lakes, Collections on John Ruskin, Beatrix Potter, Kurt Scwitters. Notable donations to the collection have come from Beatrix Potter, Rupert Potter, Henry Plummer, Herbert Bell, Ernest De Selincourt, Gordon Graham Worsworth, Canon Rawnsley. In 2014, the library of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District (founded in 1906/over 2000 volumes) was rehoused within the library.
3	Members only	Between £565 and £795 pa for proprietory membership, and £135 and £380 for associate membership	General collection reflecting interests of proprietors, strong in history (especially local), literature (English and foreign), biography, topography, classical and theological works. Roscoe collection, Blanco White Collection, Special collection of rare books, Monsarrat collection.
4	Members only, events open to all	Between £25-£70	At least half of the collection made up of the libraries of Rev. Leonard Jenyns and Christopher Edmund Broome and are strong in natural history. General collection built up by members, strengths lie in the sciences, theology and church history. Local history collection, parliamentary collection.
5	Members room, events and exhibitions open to all	Between £16.50 and £40	Holdings from the 18th century onwards. Subject vary from biography, history, literature, natural history, science and travel. Strong holding of late 19th/early 20th century novels. Comprehensive music library (LPs/CDs). Regular new purchases principally in the field of the humanities and modern fiction.
	Open to all	Free access to library, some charges for events/courses	London history, Labour and Socialist history, Freethought and Humanism, Co-operation, Protest and campaigning, LGBT history, photographic collections, parliamentary profiles

Appendix 5: The interview schedule

Independent libraries and cultural sustainability

Interview Schedule

Introduction

- Introduce self and research
- Check participant has reviewed the participant information sheet and consent form
- Check participant is happy to be recorded, is aware that information given is confidential and will be kept securely and used anonymously
- Acquire signed copy of consent form
- Interview should take around 1 hour to complete
- The purpose is to explore the role of independent libraries in sustaining culture, and how that role might be improved.
- Explain how cards will be used to explore different concepts.

Opening question

1. Could you tell me a little bit about yourself and your role at the library?

First set of cards introduced

- Explain how cards provide definitions of the key things that are important to sustaining culture

2. In the context of your library, I'd like you to order them according to how important you think they are to the overall aims of your organisation, and tell me a little bit about the key things that you do in each area

(photograph order)

3. *(At end of discussion)* Would you keep the cards in the in the same order?

(photograph order)

Second set of cards introduced

- Explain how cards provide a list of various aspects of independent libraries as organisations

4. To start off with, I'd like you to take a look at the cards and order them in the way you think best reflects how important they are in enabling the sustainability of your organisation
(Why have you ordered them in that way?)

(Photograph order)

- Explain how will now look at each area in turn. Complete the following questions according to the order proposed by the participant

Governance

5. How is the library governed?

6. What are the main challenges that you face in this area?

7. What have you done to overcome these challenges?

8. Is there anything else that you think could be done to improve things further?

Staffing

9. How is the library staffed?

10. What are the main challenges that you face in this area?

11. What have you done to overcome these challenges?

12. Is there anything else that you think could be done to improve things further?

External support

13. What external support does the library receive?

14. What are the main challenges that you face in this area?

15. What have you done to overcome these challenges?

16. Is there anything else that you think could be done to improve things further?

Community and users

17. Who are your main user groups and in what ways do they engage with the library?

18. What are the main challenges that you face in this area?

19. What have you done to overcome these challenges?

20. Is there anything else that you think could be done to improve things further?

Funding

21. What are your main funding streams?

22. What are the main challenges that you face in this area?

23. What have you done to overcome these challenges?

24. Is there anything else that you think could be done to improve things further?

Collections

25. Briefly describe your collections.

26. What are the main challenges that you face in this area?

27. What have you done to overcome these challenges?

28. Is there anything else that you think could be done to improve things further?

29. *(At end of discussion)* Would you keep the cars in the same order?

(photograph order)

Concluding question

30. Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

Concluding remarks

- Thank participant for their involvement
- Explain will email copy of transcript to be reviewed for accuracy
- Explain will provide a summary report of the research once completed

Appendix 6: Sample copy of email invitation to interview (UK)

Dear

My name is Kirsten Loach and I'm a PhD student working on a collaborative project between Manchester Metropolitan University and the Portico Library. The focus of my research is on independent libraries and cultural sustainability.

I am currently looking to recruit key informants to be interviewed on the role of independent libraries in sustaining culture and the challenges that they face achieving sustainability at an organisational level. As a representative of [name of library], I would be very keen to talk to you about these issues in the context of your library.

Your help is invaluable in enabling me to carry out this work, which will form part of a larger comparative study with independent libraries in the United States. It will not only allow me to complete my thesis, but through the numerous publications and presentations that I will be delivering on my research, it will also help to raise awareness of independent libraries in the wider library community, as well as in academia and in cultural policy circles.

As such, would it be possible to arrange a date for me to come to the library to conduct an interview with you? Each interview should take no longer than an hour to complete. The attached participant form provides further information on the study and the format of the interview, but if you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes

Kirsten Loach

Appendix 7: Sample copy of email invitation to interview (USA)

Dear

My name is Kirsten Loach and I'm a PhD student at Manchester Metropolitan University in the UK. The focus of my research is on independent libraries and cultural sustainability.

A crucial part of my research is interviewing key informants working in independent libraries on the role of their institutions in sustaining culture and the challenges that they face in achieving sustainability at an organisational level. I have already conducted a series of interviews in libraries throughout the UK, however, I am also very keen to conduct interviews with individuals from independent libraries in the States. I believe that this will not only enhance my thesis by enabling cultural and contextual comparisons to be made, but will also help to raise greater awareness of independent libraries by providing an international appeal to future publications on my research.

I shall be presenting my research at the International Conference of Independent Libraries and Mechanics Institutes, which is being held in San Francisco between the 2nd-7th of November this year. In addition to this, I have also received funding for an extended research trip to visit some of the independent libraries in the country. This will run between the 8th and 21st of November 2016.

Having conducted some research into the [name of organisation], I have been particularly impressed by the innovative strategies employed by your organisation and would very much like to include it in my research sample. As such, would it be possible to arrange a date during this period for me to come to the library to conduct an interview either with yourself or with a suitable colleague?

The interview should take no longer than an hour to complete. The attached participant form provides further information on the study and the format of the interview, but if you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes

Kirsten Loach

Appendix 8: Participant information sheet

Participant information sheet

Please read the following information sheet carefully before you consider consenting to take part in this research.

Title of Research Project	Independent libraries and cultural sustainability
Name of Researcher conducting today's interview.	Kirsten Loach
Researcher's Contact Details	kirsten.s.loach@stu.mmu.ac.uk
Aims of this research	The main aims of this research are: - To develop insight into the contributions of independent libraries to cultural sustainability - To consider the challenges to and best practices for achieving sustainability in your organisation
What will the outcomes of the research be?	The research will form part of my PhD thesis, parts of which may be published in academic journals or presented at conferences.
Why do you want me as a participant?	Participants for the study have been selected from Independent Libraries from across the UK and USA on the basis of their experience and knowledge of the sector.
What will this involve?	The study will involve an interview which will take approximately 1 hour to complete.
How will my data be recorded?	The interview will be recorded using a digital recording device and transcribed by the researcher.
Will this be confidential?	Yes. Your data will be stored securely. Only the researcher will have access to your data. Your data will be destroyed after the project is completed. When the findings are reported, efforts will be made to disguise the identity of participants. While complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed, all information that would enable people to easily identify you will be removed. This includes your name and the name of your organisation, as well as any other information that may make you or your organisation easily distinguishable.
What if I change my mind?	If at any point during or after the data collection you want to withdraw, you may remove your consent from the research and your data will be destroyed.

Appendix 9: Consent form

Consent Form

Title of Project: Independent Libraries and Cultural Sustainability

Name of Researcher: __Kirsten Loach_____

Name of Participant: _____

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.

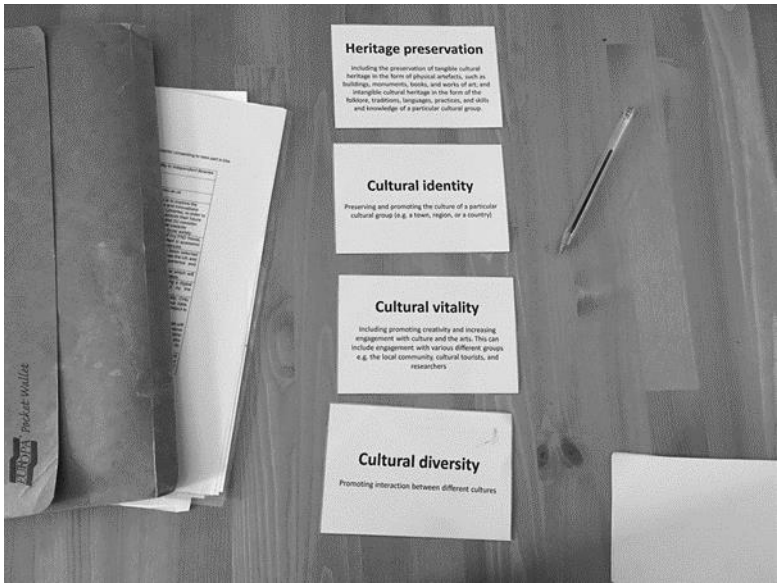
3. I agree to take part in the study.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature

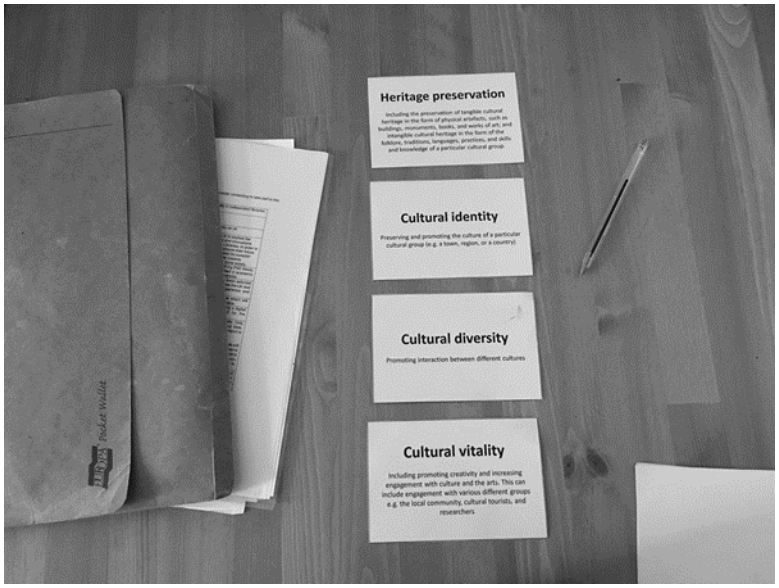
_____	_____	_____
Name of person taking Consent	Date	Signature

Appendix 10: Photographs of the card ordering process taken during interview UK1

a) First set of cards, original order:



b) First set of cards, revised order:



c) Second set of cards, original order (the same order was also given by participant UK1 after the opportunity to revise):


Funding
Governance
Staffing
Community and users
Collections
External support

Appendix 11: Example interview transcript

Interview with UK1, 23/8/16

KL: So if I could start off just by getting you to tell me a little bit about yourself and your role here and just about the library in general

UK1: So I am Deputy Library Administrator and Development Manager here, so my job kind of has two strands to it and the Deputy Library Administrator part basically means that I am second in command – my boss is the Library Administrator – and it's a really historical job title, so I'm like his little understudy kind of following him around the building because I don't know where I'm going, and the programme development side is very much about the events, the activities that take place here, and also looking into collaborative working and partnerships – especially with the universities actually – that's kind of what I'm really into. Because the [name or organisation] was really set up to educate the working man and woman in [name of city], education is our remit, we can't ever change that. Obviously education has changed, we are no longer running formal courses shall we say, so what we should be doing is looking at what courses are taking place, what researchers are doing elsewhere, bringing them in and getting them to use us as a sort of hub to kind of disseminate their research to the general public. That's kind of my vision, and sort of lots of things shoot off that as well, but currently we do study days, lectures, very informal study for the leisure learner, but we also do concerts. Our remit is really art, science, and literature, that was what we were set up to do, so we try to continue that really, in a creative way, but because of the way the institute is, I mean we have these cultural activities and of course this amazing massive building, our commercial side is really high up, so we've got to balance all the cultural activities which let's face it don't really make us any money, with room hire, so it's sort of getting those two things working together

KL: Ok, brilliant. So I'm going to give you the first set of cards…

UK1: I should say also that I look after the library because I really like it. It's kind of like everyone's job and nobody's job at the same time, but when I came here it was…

KL: It was something that you wanted to get involved in..

UK1: Yeah, it's a hidden gem

KL: So there's nobody really particularly responsible for the library in itself..

UK1: No it was just existing before I came, and it was sort of half manned by my predecessor, I came into the role and I got all of the volunteers because there needs to be someone there to help people looking for books that nobody can find, so you know it's doing something for the community in terms of volunteers but it's also making things more accessible

KL: Ok, so these cards provide definitions of things that are considered as key to sustaining culture. So in the context of your library, I'd like you to order them according to how important you think they are to the overall aims of your organisation, and tell me a little bit about the key things that you do in each area.

[CARDS ARE ORDERED AND PHOTOGRAPHED]

UK1: Ok so I would say heritage preservation is probably the most important thing that we do because the library predates the [name of organisation] as well, it is very much looking after what has sort of been there what for the past 200 years… more than that…since 1799….you can do the math…and the fact that the library was in this building before we were, it's not so much that we have a duty to look after it but actually we really do need to look after it because this building is as important as the institute which is as important as the library. And we do have some really important books downstairs – we've got some really unique satirical magazines from the 19th century, [name of city] ones – we've got all the Punches, but everyone's got the Punches – we've got The Dart and The Owl, which are really unique, and they were sort of, I want to say almost put in a skip by another library, and we actually thought no they are really important – you know they say a lot about politics during the time, so we've got that sort of thing going on. So we also have our archive in terms of physical artefacts – so all the minute books from the [name of organisation], which is really interesting if someone had the time to go through it all. And there is some really interesting and quite eminent individuals who were involved in both setting up the library and also the institute as well, so sort of preserving heritage there.

Ok, so cultural identity, preserving and promoting the culture of a particular cultural group. This is quite interesting actually because we are the [name of organisation], so we are supposed to cover the wider [name of region], but a lot of what we do is [name of city] focused, because that really is our main catchment area, so that kind of makes sense, but we kind of let our affiliated societies deal with the wider[name of region]. I mean the [name of society] downstairs is all about the genealogy of the whole [name of region] area, the [name of another society], so we kind of let them do their own thing, using us as a venue, so we sort of let them deal with that.

Cultural vitality, including promoting creativity, increasing engagement, yeah so this is kind of my speciality, I was a curator before so I've always worked in

culture, in the sort of arts perspective, so we support local artists, we have the exhibition area out in the reception foyer, and they are often, if not always, artists from the [name of region], and the works are all for sale as well so it sort of gives something back to them and also ourselves. Cultural tourists, I like that phrase, I think slowly but surely we are getting more of them interested. Previous to me starting we didn't do a lot of marketing, so we had a bit of a marketing lull, and I've found lately just using social media has been bloody brilliant in attracting those who don't necessarily want to commit to being members, but kind of want to try something new, you know, a one off event here and there, so that's been really interesting. And in terms of different groups, I think again our affiliated groups do vary, we've got the [name of region] painting group for example, we've got the arts side, we've got a gentleman who runs life drawing classes here on Monday evenings, so we kind of do a little bit of everything…

KL: So the affiliated societies, do they pay for the room hire?

UK1: Yep. They pay a very nominal joining fee, and that's dependent on how many members they have, and relationship is quite reciprocal, so we offer then discount of off venue hire, they have their meetings here, they use us as a storage space, so a load of the books actually belong to them, but in return they give us a lecture annually at least, slash use us as a venue for their lectures and everything, so it's a relationship that has been around for a long time, but it's had peaks and troughs really. At the moment we're trying to make the relationships better just in terms of we don't set in stone what it is we require of them, and they have mixed ideas of what is expected of us, so they kind of see us as a bit of a marketing vehicle, but that's actually not why we are here, and they often think that their memberships, it's up to us to sell their memberships, that's not really why, they need to take ownership of that, so it's actually at the moment having those conversations with individuals, I mean they all suffer from the same membership issue – a lot of them are dying off – dwindling numbers, and you have to be realistic and say to them do you want to get bigger, or are you happy as you are, because either is fine, they just need to work out which it is, so yeah it's kind of being a bit of a hub for them, and yeah it's helping them out but not doing everything for them.

Cultural diversity, promoting interaction between different cultures. I've got to say we're a bit rubbish at this. And I think that's a historical thing actually, it's not that we deliberately try to be exclusive at all, I think that we've just not been marketing or promoting ourselves in the right places if I'm completely honest, and how we do this is a bit of a question mark. So we're having a big open day in September along with Heritage Open Days and Heritage Week, so hopefully that will open up our doors to everyone and anyone, one thing that we do notice is that we don't get very many young people in here, there's not really anyone

under the age of about 35 maybe, maybe 30, you know we're talking about age and race really, people who do come here are often very white and middle class, so how we diversify ourselves is a big question.

KL: So in terms of priority, would you order them in that way, do you think heritage preservation is your main…

UK1: I am actually just going to rejig it a little bit, so I think the heritage preservation is the most important, I think cultural identity is really important, just because of our location, and actually our sort of name, I think cultural diversity, I've shifted it up a notch because I think it's really important to be visible to all cultures, but like I said we are not actively exclusive or anything, and cultural vitality, I think not to say that it's not important but I think this sort of exists in itself in the city, anyway so..

KL: So it's less of a priority for you as an organisation

UK1: Yeah. There's a lot going on, and we seem to be in the big bubble, with that sort of happening, so yeah.

KL: Ok that's great. So I'm now going to give you this next set of cards. So these are basically just various different aspects of an organisation. So to start off with if you could take a look at these and order them in the way that you think best reflects how important you think they are to enabling your organisation to carry out the activities that we've just been discussing.

UK1: Well, I'm going to put funding right at the top, because without funding there is no way that we can function, but having said that we don't receive any external funding, so I'm seeing funding as basically monies, so income included into that. But like I said without monies invested there is no way we can actually support especially the cultural activities, and actually just maintaining the building. But we are exploring external funding for the first time since forever, so enabling us to actually function… Governance I think I will put next, so we do have a board of trustees who make the big policies and strategy decisions, but that needs to be there really in order to give the institute a purpose I guess. I'm going to say staffing next because without the 12 members of staff – that's including the cleaners – we couldn't accommodate people, we couldn't accommodate the activities and the events. Right, I am going to put external support right at the bottom, because we actually get very little external support, and I mean that financially mainly. We also don't get any corporate sponsorship either, so I'm trying to think how else we are supported externally, programme wise we are a little bit supported externally, but I wouldn't say our programme depends on it, so I'm going to put that right at the bottom. So collections and community and users, I'm going to put community and users under staffing, so they are number four, mainly because we need people to come into the building in order for it to function, and without that our purpose is a bit pointless, we are

here to educate and if there are no users or people to educate then what's the point. And actually I'm going to put collections just above external support, because at the moment we don't really use our collection to sell as much as we could. Anecdotally in the past year when I've had members join it has actually been because of the library, but that hasn't been the reason in the past, so it's kind of a mixed bag of people joining because they want to come to the events, slash use the library, so it's sad for me to say the collections aren't essential to why we function, it's a nice add on to…

KL: Ok. So I'm now just going to look at each area a little more closely. So I'll start off at the top and work the way down. So if you could just tell me a little bit more about your main funding streams

UK1: Room hire, and we have two tenants in the building at the moment, so the [Name of first tenant] and also the [Name of second tenant], we've got a couple of smaller ones but they are sort of our main income, however the [Name of first tenant] are leaving actually right now because we've got the conservatoire moving in. So actually it's quite nice because the conservatoire came from the Institute, they were our department of music, which later became the school of music, and there was a bit of contention between the teaching staff and the [Name of organisation] management so they up and left in the 50's, so when the [Name of organisation] moved in here, the school of music went off and formed the conservatoire, so it's nice that they are coming back for an academic year, but because they are taking up most of the building we've had to say goodbye to the [name of first tenant] and it's quite sad because they have been here for decades as well, but actually there membership is dwindling also, and you know financially it doesn't necessarily make sense for them to continue, so they're off. Room hire is another way we generate income, some of our cultural activities, but to be honest they don't really make us money – they cover costs.

KL: Yeah because I think you said before you don't receive any grants or anything like that

UK1: No, we get the odd bequest here and there, and I think in the past we've had the odd pot of money donated, but you know nothing recently.

KL: Ok, so what are the main challenges that you think you face in accessing the funding that you need?

UK1: Prioritising actually, prioritising the projects that need doing. So in my head the library is a big project in itself, digitisation, sorting it out, making the space accessible and more user friendly, you know as I said to you earlier all the books are dotted around the building, and actually they should all be in one place if it's a library, it's sort of little things like that. But you know, do I digitise it first or do I sort the space out or do I so it all at the same time? The next big thing I suppose is actually refurbishing the building, so for example our roof is

leaking, it's been leaking for a long time, and every year we spend thousands on patching it up when actually we just need to spend a few thousand on actually getting it fixed, that sort of thing, so yeah that sort of building décor needs updating. I mean a lot of it is very sort of surface level, but there are things like the leaking roof that are a bit annoying

KL: So do you think that's the next priority then, to sort the building out?

UK1: Yeah, but I think it's actually breaking it down into manageable chunks, so I'm going to explore corporate sponsorship – can a company sponsor the decoration of a room, you know, that's not going to cost the solicitors up the road a huge amount of money. I mean what's great about it, where the building is now is that we're in the middle of the financial district in [name of city], so we've got lawyers, solicitors all around us and yet we've never actually approached them to say hey, can you give us a couple of thousand pounds for some Farrow and Ball paint, so that's what we need to do…

KL: So there's a lot of opportunity right on your doorstep essentially

UK1: Yeah, absolutely, and also the universities have been really good, [Name of university] are particularly supportive, so it's just working out what to do first again, going back to the prioritisation scenario.

KL: Ok. Right, we'll move on to governance. So how is the library governed first of all?

UK1: So the library is being looked after by us and the trustees basically, but since about 3-4 months ago I set up a library committee, so the library committee meet and discuss library related things and then that's reported back to the general lot of trustees, and I find that just more manageable really because I don't need all 20 of them or whatever to discuss what books need to be kept and what needs to be disposed of, actually I just need this core 5-6 people to decides and then pass on the information, and a handful of my committee have basically volunteered themselves, also they have a vested interest in the library themselves, so that makes a difference actually.

KL: So do you think that's helped a lot then to have less people involved?

UK1: Yes it has, it makes things move quicker

KL: Ok. So staffing, how is the library staffed?

UK1: Well I've got nine volunteers, but in terms of paid members of staff there are twelve of us, not all of us are full time. So before we had I think about 1 or 2 volunteers before I started, and you know they did their day or days and that was kind of it, but actually when I started I has people approaching me and asking, you know, whether there were volunteer opportunities, and I was like "If you like libraries, we always need someone to man the library desk", for security

purposes mainly, but like I said also to help people find stuff which is a bit of a nightmare sometimes. So having them there makes a huge difference, because they're someone for people to talk to as they come in, and it gives the [name of organisation] and the library a bit of a voice and a bit of a face which it didn't really have before, so that sort of interaction I think. And it makes people come back, they're like "Oh I know this volunteer is here on a Wednesday, I'll have a chat with them while I'm getting a book", so that's always really lovely – it's forming a community in itself really, that makes a big difference.

KL: Yes, it sounds like it's been pretty successful really going down the whole volunteer route…

UK1: Yeah, but it's also being careful not to give them these sort of critical roles that we were talking about at the conference, and [name of volunteer 1] downstairs in particular, she's just started a blog for us which is wonderful but I'm also quite aware that it needs to be a blog that everyone can actually get involved with, because I don't want to be giving people important specific tasks that again is you know dependent on that one person to see through. So it's making sure that they all have ownership over something, but at the same time they're all doing the same thing, if that makes sense

KL: Yeah, everyone had different ideas of what they want, and…

UK1: Yeah, exactly and I can personalise their role within the library, you know I know [name of volunteer 2] who comes in on a Monday, he's really hot on classical music, so you know he really knows those CDs and he's been cataloguing a bequest that we received lately, and that's been lovely because he knows what he's looking for – give that to [volunteer 1], and you know "I don't know what I'm looking at" – so you know it's kind of just finding tasks that fit, but at the same time everyone working together, not you know independently.

KL: So is it quite a time consuming thing having volunteers or?

UK1: It can be. There are some volunteers who literally just want to sit at the desk, and that is fine, you know, I don't have to get involved, but we just recruited another new volunteer [name of volunteer 3], who wants to do more practical hands-on stuff – she doesn't want to sit at the desk, so I've had to sit down with [volunteer 1] and say "What's our to-do list? What books need moving around? What books need accessioning?" so yeah, that takes a bit of time and a bit of thought, but I'd like to think that that's an investment in a volunteer, it gives them new skills, and it means that we get something done to the standard that we want it done.

KL: Ok. So do you think you're more likely to continue going down this volunteer route, it's not likely to ever go back to paid staff?

UK1: I would love paid staff – we did used to have a paid librarian, back in the day. I'm keen to have a paid cataloguer, for example, if and when we get this digitisation project, and yeah it would be nice to have a paid librarian, I think paid professional staff do make a big difference, and if they can pass their skills on to the volunteer team then that saves me having to do – I don't actually know a huge amount about libraries – I mean that would be a godsend…

KL: So having that sort of expertise would be really useful…

UK1: Yeah, it would be really important

KL: Ok. Community and users, so who would you say are your main users, and how do they engage with the library?

UK1: So members, because only they can access the library, we have had a handful of research enquiries – academics asking to look at stuff…

KL: How do they find out about you?

UK1: A lot of it is word-of-mouth, or the interweb, but because our catalogue isn't on the internet, they would have to contact us and we would have to go and have a look, and it's a bit of a long-winded process

KL: So what about the community in general, do they use the library at all? Is it just members?

UK1: General members of the public? No because they can't – they are not allowed to…

KL: But they use the building for events and stuff like that?

UK1: Yes, exactly, yes.

KL: Ok. So what are the main challenges that you face in cultivating and maintain this engagement with these different users?

UK1: Actually being able to communicate to them what it is we do has been a big challenge, because we do a lot in terms of the types of events that we hold here, and because we've also got our affiliated societies in the mix, I think our identity is a little bit confused, and then trying to sell the library on top of that – the fact that it is the [Name of library taken over by the organisation], but that we own and run it – it's in our building, but also we're in its building – that's quite a confusing story to tell

KL: So it's difficult for people who don't really know what you're about and what you offer…

UK1: Yeah, precisely, so actually we kind of just need to be a bit more streamlined in what information we tell people. I've personally been doing a lot of guided tours in the building lately, we've got more coming up on this open

day, and that's actually been really useful because you get to hear other people's opinion and interpretation of your building before and after, and then you're like "Oh that's where I'm going wrong", and we put new signage outside the building now to tell people about the building, what it is we do and about the library, to encourage people to come in, and we have that thing outside so people don't have to sort of peer in and have that awkward sort of "What's this all about?". And having that 'What's on' board out there, they don't need to cross over the boundary in order to find out. So I think actually, summing all of that up, it's actually giving them the information, rather than expecting them to find it out.

KL: Is there anything else that you'd like to do to improve things further, in terms of...

UK1: More marketing, there's always more marketing. Working with young people would be great, I would love to do more of that sort of thing, but it is just how we do it, in what form, bearing in mind that there's not a lot of us here to actually run the stuff, but this is where the sort of partnership collaboration thing comes in, so yesterday I had a conversation with [Name of local writing group] about what they do with young people in terms of arts awards and things and how we could potentially be a venue for something that they run or a summer school or something – nothing happens here in August – so there are lots of opportunities for that sort of thing to happen.

KL: So collections. So if you just briefly describe your collection again to me.

UK1: So library wise we have over 100,000 books, I think actually it's about 120,000 – there's a lot – over 6,000 of which are biographies. We also have a large collection of detective fiction, poetry and literature, fiction. We also have the odd artwork floating around the building, they haven't been properly researched yet, that's on my to-do-list, and we've got our archive, and we've also got the [name of collection], which is all of the architecture, topographical, ecclesiastical architecture.

KL: Ok, so again what are the main challenges that you face in maintaining and developing these collections?

UK1: Well I think looking after the older books, you know the ones that I showed you wrapped in newspaper, oh dear god, I mean you worry about the condition of the books when you unwrap them, so it's making sure that their condition is maintained, but that comes at an expense, and we're doing stuff quite on the cheap at the moment so it's just really putting things into boxes, and there's obviously no environmental damage there. Storage space, we don't have a lot of that left - the library is sort of over spilling - and also how do people access the library collections, finding out what's in it, that's a bit of a problem.

KL: Ok so what would be your main priorities?

UK1: Digitisation, that's a word that I keep on saying, but also making the library function properly – it's so difficult to find stuff – it's all a bit of a nightmare, if we could have a proper system, racks in place, that would be my dream.

KL: Ok so external support – I think you said that you don't receive much external support at all…

UK1: No, in kind I think we do, in terms of the partnerships that I've been trying to put together, programme support, but nothing of a massively financial sort at least. I mean the conservatoire coming in, I don't really see that as external support, I see that as a commercial transaction, so yeah, it's a bit of a difficult one.

KL: Are there any ways that you think you could improve or develop your links to other organisations?

UK1: Yeah, just more tea and coffee and cake really – it sounds silly, but that has actually been really helpful – just inviting people into the building, showing them around and telling them what we can offer, and then something tweaks in their head and then something happens, that's kind of my format for working really – bribe people with tea, coffee and cake! But no, seriously, people actually need to come in and see what this place is about – I can't tell you about this over the phone, it's not going to work, and our website can't really tell you about this either. So yeah, it is just about inviting people in, and I don't just mean in a meeting format – the general public, getting them in off the street I think that make a big difference, yeah.

KL: Ok. I think if you could just take one last look at the cards and the way that you've ordered them. After you've gone through everything would you keep them in the same order or have your opinions changed at all?

UK1: Well the staffing issue, that's quite interesting, as the volunteers I don't' actually see as staff, they're volunteers and not having a paid member of staff in the library hasn't been essential for a couple of decades, so if we're talking about staff for the library then that actually can go somewhere near the bottom. But in terms of staff for the building, they're pretty essential, like I said we're kind of on a bit of a shoestring anyway so without them we wouldn't be able to open the library. So there's kind of two ways about it, but on second thoughts they are pretty essential so I guess they would probably need to stay where they are.

KL: Ok, but other than that are you happy with it?

UK1: Yeah, I think I am happy

KL: Lastly is there anything that you'd like to add that you don't think has been covered?

CW: …I think because as well as the library, it's the [name or organisation], and we've had this conversation between the librarians and the trustees even, I mean do we see the library as a separate thing, or is it part of us, is it us? How do we communicate that to people. I think some people are really precious about the library being the institute, I'm not so precious because to me books need to be out there for everyone, but at the same time there's the members only access issue. At the last committee meeting one of the trustees brought up the idea of a library only membership, and I was like bloody brilliant, let me think about it, but actually the practicalities of it are that it will stop members joining the [name of organisation], and people will only join the library, in which case the [name or organisation], what's the point? So it's really trying to please everyone.

Appendix 12: Website addresses of the ILA and MLG libraries

ILA Libraries	
Name of Library	**Web Address**
The Armitt Library	www.armitt.com
Bath Royal Literary & Scientific Institution	www.brlsi.org
Birmingham and Midland Institute	www.bmi.org.uk
Bromley House Library	www.bromleyhouse.org
Bishopsgate Institute	www.bishopsgate.org.uk
Bradford Mechanics' Institute	www.bradfordmechanicsinstitute.weebly.com
Central Catholic Library	www.catholiclibrary.ie
Chawton House Library	www.chawtonhouse.org
Chetham's Library	www.chethams.org.uk
The Devon and Exeter Institution	www.devonandexeterinstitution.org
Gladstone's Library	www.gladstoneslibrary.org
The Guildford Institute	www.guildford-institute.org.uk
Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution	www.hlsi.net
Innerpeffray Library	www.innerpeffraylibrary.co.uk
Ipswich Institute Reading Room and Library	www.ipswichinstitute.org.uk
The Langholm Library	www.langolmlibrarytrust.org.uk
The Leeds Library	www.theleedslibrary.org.uk
The Linen Hall Library	www.linenhall.com
The Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle	www.litandphil.org.uk
The Liverpool Athenaeum	www.theathenaeum.org.uk
The London Library	www.londonlibrary.org.uk
The Morrab Library	www.morrablibrary.org.uk
The Plymouth Athenaeum Library	www.plymouthathenaeum.co.uk
The Plymouth Proprietary Library	www.plymouthproprietarylibrary.org.uk
The Portico Library	www.theporticio.org.uk
Saffron Walden Town Library Society	www.townlib.org.uk
Sybil Campbell Collection	www.sybillcampbellcollection.org.uk
Tavistock Subscription Library	www.tavistocksubsciptionlibrary.co.uk

Thomas Plume's Library	www.thomasplumeslibrary.co.uk
Thoresby Society	www.thoresby.org.uk
Westerkirk Parish Library	www.westerkirkparishlibrary.org
Whitby Museum, Library and Archive	www.whitbymusuem.org.uk
Working Class Movement Library	www.wcml.org.uk
MLG Libraries	
Name of Library	**Web Address**
Athenaeum Music & Arts Library	www.ljathenaeum.org
The Athenaeum of Philadelphia	www.philaathenaeum.org
The Boston Athenaeum	www.bostonathenaeum.org
The Charleston Library Society	www.charlestonlibrarysociety.org
Folio: The Seattle Athenaeum	www.folioseattle.org
The Institute Library	www.institutelibrary.org
The General Society Library	www.generalsociety.org
The Lanier Library	www.thelanierlibrary.org
The Library Company of Philadelphia	www.librarycompany.org
The Maine Charitable Mechanics Association	www.mainecharitablemechanicassociation.com
The Mechanics' Institute Library, San Francisco	www.milibrary.org
The Mercantile Library, Cincinnati	www.mercantilelibrary.com
The Center for Fiction	www.centerforfiction.org
The Minneapolis Athenaeum	www.hclib.org/about/locations/minneapolis-athenaeum
The New York Society Library	www.nysoclib.org
The Portsmouth Athenaeum	www.portsmouthathenaeum.org
The Providence Athenaeum	www.providenceathenaeum.org
Redwood Library & Athenaeum	www.redwoodlibrary.org
The Salem Athenaeum	www.salemathenaeum.net
St. Johnsbury Athenaeum	www.stjathenaeum.org
The St. Louis Mercantile Library Association	www.umsl.edu/mercantile
Timrod Literary and Library Association	www.timrodlibrary.org

Appendix 13: Copy of article published during the research project

Reference: Loach, K., Rowley, J. and Griffiths, J. (2017) 'Cultural sustainability as a strategy for the survival of museums and libraries' *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 23(2) pp.186-198.

Cultural sustainability as a strategy for the survival of museums and libraries

Cultural sustainability has become a growing priority within sustainable development agendas, and is now often depicted as a fourth pillar, equal to social, economic, and environmental concerns. Museums and libraries play a unique role within cultural sustainability by preserving their communities' heritage. However, sustainability policy and research within these sectors still tends to focus on the social, economic, and environmental pillars. This article provides a critique of sustainability policy and research for museums and libraries. It argues that more explicit coverage of cultural sustainability is required to not only improve the contributions of museums and libraries to cultural sustainability, but also to provide an increased understanding and appreciation of the value of these institutions necessary for their continued survival.

Keywords: cultural sustainability; heritage; museums; libraries; sustainable development

Introduction

Libraries, particularly through their special collections, and museums maintain important cultural artefacts that represent a significant part of the heritage of the communities that they serve. Indeed, not only their collections, but also the museums and libraries themselves, including their history and buildings, are a cultural asset that can enrich local communities and, alongside other heritage attractions contribute to tourism associated with a city or region.

One of the primary aims of museums and libraries is to hold these cultural assets in trust for their communities, yet a series of challenges in recent years have put the long-term survival of these institutions at risk, with

implications for the sustainability of the cultural assets within their care. Cuts to public funding and reducing revenues for charitable organisations (ACE 2011), together with difficulties in maintaining relevance within increasingly competitive leisure and information markets (Kazi 2012), mean that both museums and libraries face an ongoing battle to justify their existence and secure their futures.

Finding themselves lacking in support for their cultural mission, organisations have been encouraged to adopt more sustainable business models based upon the triple bottom line approach, which evaluates their work according to their contribution to the wider social, economic, and environmental sustainable development goals of society (Jankowska and Marcum 2010; Stylianou-Lambert, Boukas, and Christodoulou-Yarali 2014). Yet whilst such measures can often help to ensure the general sustainability of their organisations, it can also lead to the neglect of their original mission, with the pressure to meet targets and demonstrate value in these three areas leading to the 'acquisition, preservation, and research of the collections' becoming 'considered subordinate' to these other 'aims' (Anderson 2009, 6).

However, there is increasing recognition that culture is of equal importance as social, economic, and environmental concerns in a sustainable society. Indeed, the inclusion of a concern for culture within sustainable development agendas was a central focus of the United Nations' post 2015 sustainability goals (IFACCA 2013). With the preservation of cultural heritage and the promotion of cultural vitality having been identified as key to enabling cultural sustainability (Soini and Birkeland 2014), this would seem to be a prime opportunity for museums and libraries to demonstrate the true value of their work. Yet to date there has been limited acknowledgment of the notion of cultural sustainability as an equal concern within sustainability policies for museums and libraries, and as a result, their work to sustain culture continues to be considered as subsidiary to demonstrating their contributions to social, economic, and environmental concerns.

Accordingly, this article aims to highlight the disparity that currently exists between museum and library practices that have cultural sustainability at their core, and policy that values the work of these institutions in sustaining culture according to its ancillary benefits rather than its intrinsic value. It suggests that if one of the functions of policy is to align practice with wider agendas in society, then policies for museums and libraries should be revised in order to reflect the growing consensus that cultural sustainability should be considered as a definitive outcome in its own right. This would then provide further justification for the future support of museums and libraries, by helping to articulate the value of their unique role in sustaining culture beyond its instrumental role in social, economic and environmental issues. Specifically, this article:

(1) Profiles the museum and library sectors in the UK
(2) Reviews the use of the triple bottom line in sustainability policy and research within the museum and library sectors

(3) Explores the growing consensus surrounding culture as the ‘fourth pillar’ of sustainability
(4) Considers the implications of the lack of recognition of culture as an equal pillar within sustainability policy and research in the museum and library sectors
(5) Proposes directions for future research and development

Profile of the museum and library sector in the UK

The Museums Association estimates that there are around 2,500 museums in the UK. These range from national museums run by central government, whose collections are 'considered to be of national importance'; to local authority run museums that hold collections which tend to ‘reflect local history and heritage'. In addition to these, many university museums maintain collections relating 'to specific areas of academic interest', and a diverse range of independent museums 'owned by registered charities and other independent bodies or trusts', also hold materials that vary considerably in their area of interest, focusing on anything from tanks to pencils (Museums Association 2015).

The UK also has an estimated 4,145 public libraries (Public Libraries News 2015). Working to ‘provide free services that empower people with access to resources’, these libraries are generally run by local authorities (GOV.UK 2013), and, as with museums, exist alongside a variety of other kinds of library. Akin to national museums, national libraries contain ‘a high concentration of the nation’s treasures’, often working to collect together ‘the literary production of the nation’ (IFLA, 1997). Academic libraries exist to support the work of students and researchers by providing access to relevant resources (CILIP 2014), whilst special libraries, that are often privately owned and sometimes form part of a larger business or organisation, hold collections that tend to be of a more specialist interest specific to the requirements of the institution that they support (Merriam-Webster 2015).

This list is by no means exhaustive. There are numerous other types of library and museum, and the ways in which they are classified can also often be far more complex than suggested, owing to systems of governance that can sometimes cross between public, private and academic sectors. Nevertheless, the central mission of all of these organisations revolves around the maintenance of collections for the benefit of users. Museums aim to honour ‘the legacy of collections, information and knowledge contributed by people in the past’ in order to pass it on ‘to future generations' (Museums Association 2008, 4); whilst the main purpose of libraries is said to revolve around the ‘selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information’ (ALA 2015). This again involves the management of collections, whether in physical or digital form.

Regardless of any differences in specific missions or aims in maintaining these collections, a diverse range of cultural assets reside within the care of many of these institutions. Taking the museums and libraries of Manchester as an example, the focus of collections can vary from archaeology, anthropology and natural history at the university owned Manchester Museum (Manchester Museum 2015), to the history of the working classes at the Working Class Movement Library, which is an independent registered charity (WCML 2010). The history of theatre in the city resides within the special collections at the central public library (Manchester City Council 2015), whilst it is possible to explore the history of science and engineering within the collections of the Museum of Science and Industry, which is part of the nationwide Science Museum Group (MOSI 2015).

These museum and library collections are often housed within historic buildings that can be considered cultural assets in their own right. Continuing with the example of Manchester, the neo-gothic Manchester Museum was designed by the renowned Victorian architect Alfred Waterhouse (Manchester Museum 2015), and the neoclassical circular Central Library was designed by Vincent Harris and built in the 1930s (Pidd 2014). Such buildings are iconic landmarks within the city and have strong links to the community in which they are based. For example, the Portico Library was built in 1806 as Manchester was in the grip of its 'boomtown' phase, and its members included many closely involved in the industrial revolution (Portico Library 2015).

Museums and libraries clearly make significant contributions to the cultural landscape and maintain a vast array of cultural heritage for their communities. The role that these organisations play is however far more complex than simply preserving cultural heritage for posterity. Indeed, the museum sector, in particular, has long recognised that organisations have a greater responsibility to society than simply preserving and interpreting cultural artefacts, and should play an active role in improving society by working to address contemporary issues and using their expertise to make a positive difference to their communities (Janes 2006).

This perspective is now a fundamental part of museum theory and practice. The Museums Association's 'Museums 2020' initiative for the future development of the sector provides further clarification of how museums are expected to benefit society, ranging from 'improving people's lives, building communities, strengthening society and protecting the environment' (Museums Association 2012, 3). Meanwhile, libraries are expected to have a similar wide-ranging role in inspiring and supporting communities, through having an impact on health and wellbeing, providing social and educational benefits, and making contributions at an economic level (Fujiwara, Lawton, and Mourato 2015; ACE 2014a).

Having a more active role in society in this way is essential for achieving the long-term sustainability of museums and libraries, especially when the public funding of cultural organisations at the cost of other vital services is being questioned (ACE 2011). Engaging with contemporary concerns provides a sense of relevance to the work that organisations undertake in preserving heritage that has clear and immediate benefit for communities, thus counteracting the notion that such work is simply an 'add-on', or 'nice to have' addition to society (ACE 2011, 3).

The triple bottom line in museums and libraries

As the Museums Association's 'Museums 2020' initiative suggests, it is not however enough for there to be a 'generalised sense that a museum provides public benefit by merely existing' (Museums Association 2012, 4). In order to prove their value and continue to be supported, it is essential that museums as well as libraries develop 'defined and explicit' explanations of how their activities benefit wider society (4).

As a concern that permeates all levels of society, sustainable development provides a comprehensive approach by which organisations can demonstrate such value. Having originated from a concern over the rapid depletion of ecological resources, the sustainable development ethos recognises that we must move away from 'exclusively economic' ideas about development to a more holistic approach (Hawkes 2001, 9). If society is to develop in a way that 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED 1987, 16), then economic growth must be balanced against not only a concern for the protection of the natural environment, but also a concern for the social wellbeing of humanity. These three interdependent aspects of human existence are considered to be of equal importance in enabling society to continue to function and are commonly referred to as the three pillars of sustainability, as if any one of the pillars is found to be weak, then the whole system becomes unsustainable (Figure 1).

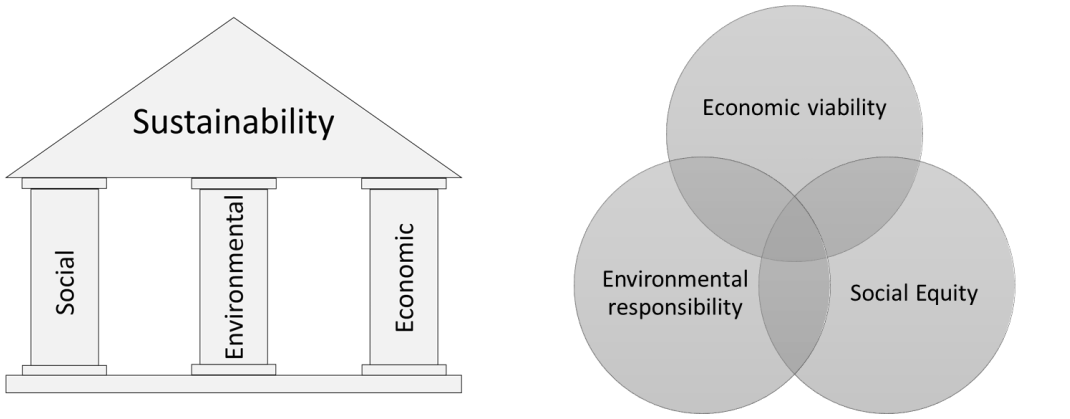


Figure 1: Popular depictions of the three pillars of sustainability, with the Venn diagram emphasising the interdependence of the three components.

Organisations are now increasingly expected to demonstrate their contributions to sustainability according to these three pillars. This has led to what is known as the triple bottom line approach being adopted across many sectors, which evaluates an organisation according to its wider social, economic, and environmental impact. As organisations that have a fundamental obligation to have socially responsible relationships with their communities, it is not surprising that the applicability of such measures was quickly recognised in both the museum and library sectors. There is now a wealth of policy and research to guide both museums and libraries in becoming more sustainable organisations, and institutions are increasingly expected to align their practices and missions with wider sustainable development agendas.

Museums are expected to 'achieve greater social outcomes and impact' (Museums Association 2013,3), 'enrich[ing] the lives of individuals, contribut[ing] to strong and resilient communities, and help[ing] create a fair and just society' (2), whilst libraries are expected to 'clarify' and 'design impact measures' of their social objectives' (Shared Intelligence 2013). Numerous reports also strive to demonstrate the contributions of organisations to the economy. For example, the 2015 'Economic impact of Museums in England' report estimates that the nation's museums 'generate an average of £3 income for every £1 of public sector funding invested in the sector' (Kendall 2015). Similarly, the 2014 'Evidence review of the economic contribution of libraries' works to provide insight of the 'contribution public libraries can make at an economic level' (ACE 2014b). Attention has also been paid to environmental concerns, with 'SMART' targets having been developed for museums to help enable them to become greener institutions (Madan 2011, 82), and groups having been set up to consider how libraries can become more environmentally sustainable (IFLA 2014).

These initiatives clearly reflect sustainable development concerns, and an increasing acceptance of the triple bottom line approach to assessing the

value of organisations across society. There are many beneficial effects of adopting this approach for museums and libraries. It enables them to demonstrate their continued relevance to society and provides them with alternative ways to measure the value of their services, which are often difficult to demonstrate solely in terms of economic profit (ACE 2014b). Many actions that contribute to wider sustainability goals can also have a positive effect on the sustainability of organisations themselves. For example, efforts to reduce energy consumption according to environmental goals can enable financial savings to be made, and outreach projects working towards wider social wellbeing can act as a valuable marketing exercise, promoting wider awareness and helping to develop a positive image of an organisation and its work. At policy level, it also provides policymakers with targets that have long-term relevance and that are applicable to every community, enabling the development of policies that are relevant to institutions across an entire sector.

Despite these many benefits, concerns over the use of the triple bottom line within museums and libraries have been raised. Whilst the adoption of this approach may help to ensure the general future of an institution, it does not allow for adequate recognition of the unique role of museums and libraries in sustaining cultural heritage for their communities. As Campolmi (2013, 239) suggests, 'Preserving but also creating culture makes museums [and by inference, many libraries] core mission different from that of any other media, cultural institutions, commercial businesses and industrial firms'. By evaluating the work of museums and libraries according to the triple bottom line, the unique value of their work in 'preserving and creating culture' is lost, being considered only according to its contribution to wider sustainability goals, rather than according to any intrinsic cultural value that it may hold.

This approach to evaluating culture through its wider impact rather than its intrinsic value is by no means new. Employing instrumental arguments to demonstrate 'culture's contribution to other kinds of good' has been common practice since the 1980s and has partly arisen owing to the difficulties that exist in understanding and demonstrating the value of culture itself (Holden 2004, 15). Whilst this approach is clearly beneficial in helping cultural institutions to develop socially responsible relationships with their communities, there has been growing concern that this practice of evaluating cultural activity according to its instrumental value can have negative repercussions for the cultural sector. Indeed, as Holden suggests, it has meant that

> 'The cultural aims and practices of organisations have been subverted. Energies have been directed into chasing funding and collecting evidence rather than achieving cultural purposes. In the search for outcomes and ancillary benefits, the essence of culture has been lost' (2004, 20).

Being based upon demonstrating wider impact on social, economic, and environmental concerns, sustainability policies for museums and libraries can be seen to reinforce this approach to evaluating cultural activity through its instrumental value. It is therefore arguable that the increased focus upon meeting the targets of funders and demonstrating value according to these policy agendas can have such negative repercussions as those suggested by Holden. Indeed, as Anderson (2009,6) suggests, working towards such policy agendas can even lead to the 'acquisition, preservation, and research' of collections becoming 'considered subordinate' to these other 'aims', with the continuity and development of collections suffering as a result.

The fourth pillar: cultural sustainability

Recent changes within the sustainable development field however have the potential to develop a wider appreciation and understanding of the unique role that museums and libraries play in sustaining cultural heritage. Cultural sustainability, originally considered by many as a component of social sustainability, is now often regarded as a distinct component of equal importance to other sustainability concerns. Indeed, many sustainable development models now depict culture as the 'fourth pillar', situated alongside social, economic, and environmental concerns (Hawkes 2001, i), (Figure 2).

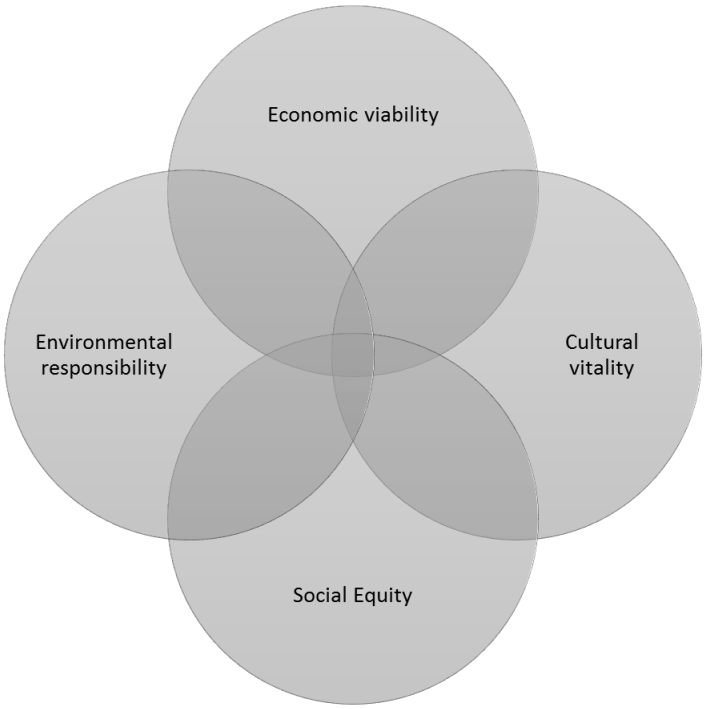


Figure 2: A depiction of the four pillars of sustainability, showing the maintenance of cultural vitality as being of equal importance to environmental, social, and economic concerns.

Defining exactly what we mean by 'culture' has long been a difficult task. Definitions of the term have changed greatly over the centuries and vary considerably according to the discipline from which it is approached (Barthel-Bouchier 2013). Culture can of course refer to 'intellectual and creative products', such as those which museums and libraries work to conserve and produce (CIDA 2000, 1). However, it can also refer to 'the beliefs and practices' of a society, being part of its 'fabric' and shaping the way in which ‘things are done and our understanding of why this should be so' (1).

This second definition would seem to support the thesis that culture is essential for a sustainable society to be possible. Social cohesion depends upon the shared 'patterns of thought and behaviour, values, and beliefs' (Barthel-Bouchier 2013, 11) that culture encompasses. It is also through culture that we learn about 'economic, social, and environmental issues', and develop our ideas about how society should 'address' them (Duxbury and Gillette 2007, 10). From this perspective, whilst culture may have struggled to achieve validation alongside other sustainability goals, it can in fact be considered fundamental to the entire sustainability movement. Culture is not only integral to the existence of a society or social group in the first place but is also what provides us with the means of 'comprehending' and 'implementing' the changes in our ideas about living that are required to enable a more sustainable society to be possible (Hawkes 2001, 25).

There is still much work required to fully understand and develop the notion of cultural sustainability. Indeed, owing to the ‘iterative and reciprocal relationship, in which culture constructs society but society also shapes culture’, there are still many difficulties that exist in trying to separate cultural and social sustainability concerns (Dessein et al 2015, 25). Nevertheless, certain concerns have been identified that can be considered key to enabling cultural sustainability. Indeed, Soini and Birkeland's (2014, 221) analysis of the scientific discourse surrounding cultural sustainability suggests that whilst it may still be ‘at an early stage in its conceptual evolution’, the need for the protection of cultural heritage and the strengthening of cultural vitality have emerged as two key 'story lines' within the literature surrounding the term. These concerns, it is proposed, can most clearly be seen to form the ‘fourth, cultural pillar of sustainability parallel to ecological, social, and economic sustainability' (220).

As such, the protection of cultural heritage assets, which provide a core means by which cultural values and meanings are transferred, is now considered by UNESCO (2013) to be crucial for cultural sustainability to be possible. These assets include both tangible forms of cultural heritage, such as buildings, monuments, books, and works of art; and intangible cultural heritage, such as folklore, traditions, and languages. Of course, the management of such cultural assets is far more complex than simply ensuring their preservation, as they cannot exist in isolation from the wider cultural needs of society. This more dynamic relationship between cultural heritage and society has many similarities

to the relationship between ecological resources and society. Both can be described as forming a 'stock' of 'capital' which is 'inherited from our forebears and which we pass on to future generations' (Throsby 1997, 15), but which must equally be utilised for the benefit of the current population.

To this end, Throsby identifies five key sustainability principles originally devised to aid in the sustainable management of ecological resources, but owing to their similarities, can equally be applied to the management of cultural heritage. These include ensuring equity in terms of access to cultural resources for both current and future generations; fostering cultural diversity and applying the precautionary principle when managing cultural heritage to prevent irreversible damage or loss. In addition, it is also considered necessary to maintain an awareness of the interconnectedness of the cultural, economic, social, and environmental systems, and the consequent effects that any decisions made when managing cultural heritage may have on these other sustainability concerns (Throsby 2011). If, as has been suggested, the protection of cultural assets is as central to cultural sustainability as the protection of ecological resources is to environmental sustainability, then it would seem necessary for similar principles to be applied to the management of cultural heritage.

Interestingly, this is not the only comparison to be drawn between the cultural and environmental sustainability spheres. In a similar way to how organisms are linked together with their environment as part of an ecosystem, in the last decade the idea that 'cultural activities' are 'linked together' in 'dynamic ways' has also been recognised (Holden 2015,3). The AHRC's report entitled 'The ecology of culture' proposes that in order to understand 'the complex interdependencies that shape the demand for and production of arts and cultural offerings' (2), rather than considering culture as an economy, it is far more useful to take an 'ecological approach' (2). The report suggests that rather than following the traditional linear and economically focused approach to evaluating cultural production, it is far more profitable to consider the cultural sector in terms of its dynamic nature, concentrating on the

> 'relationships and patterns within the overall system, showing how careers develop, ideas transfer, money flows, and product and content move, to and fro, around and between' the various organisations and individuals involved with the cultural sector (Holden 2015, 2).

Just as those working in the field of ecology have realised that environmental problems must be addressed according to an awareness of the 'wholeness and interconnectedness' of ecological systems, so it is now becoming clear that cultural 'producers, advocates, and policymakers' must also take a similar stance to 'strengthen the arts and cultural sphere' (Holden 2015, 6). The AHRC's report makes a number of preliminary suggestions of approaches that could be taken in order to achieve this, based on considering

the roles that different stakeholders play in sustaining culture, the complex networks that exist between them, and how best to increase the durability and productivity of these cultural systems. In practice, developing such perspectives of the cultural sector can aid those involved in its future development. For example, mapping local cultural ecologies, which involves 'Combining descriptions of activity, infrastructure, history, and demographics...with data about cultural participation and its objective and subjective effects' (24), can help to determine the main strengths and weaknesses of the sector within a specific locality, and thus aid local authorities in deciding 'where their investment is best deployed' (32).

Just as an acute awareness of complex ecosystems and the careful management of ecological resources underpins environmental sustainability, so there would seem to be an increasing recognition that a similar approach is required for our cultural systems in order for cultural sustainability to be possible. If culture is as fundamental to enabling a sustainable society as has been suggested, then more strategic methods of encouraging cultural vitality and managing our cultural heritage, as key components of the fourth pillar, would certainly seem necessary.

Integration of cultural sustainability in sustainability policy and research for museums and libraries

The idea that culture should be considered as a distinct pillar within sustainable development agendas is now gaining widespread acceptance. Indeed, the need for greater consideration of cultural sustainability was a primary focus in the United Nation's post 2015 sustainability goals (IFACCA 2013). Along with the growing consensus surrounding the idea that the protection of cultural heritage is crucial for cultural sustainability to be possible (UNESCO 2013), this would seem to be a prime opportunity to demonstrate the value of the work of museums and libraries in sustaining culture beyond its impact on social, economic, and environmental concerns. Yet despite this, the focus of sustainability research within museums has tended to remain upon their relationship 'with primarily environmental and secondarily economic and social sustainability' (Stylianou-Lambert, Boukas, and Christodoulou-Yarali 2014, 569).

This would also appear to be the case within library research, with the majority of studies focusing on 'greening' initiatives (Jankowska and Marcum 2010, 162). Even research or initiatives focusing specifically on the maintenance of either physical or digital collections within libraries again tend to focus on the environmental, economic and social aspects of the sustainability of these collections (Chowdhury 2014; Hamilton 2004; Jankowska and Marcum 2010). Little reference is made to cultural sustainability either as a way to guide the development of more sustainable practices or to provide explanation for why this work is necessary, despite the fact that such projects are often dealing directly with the preservation of cultural artefacts.

A similar story is told within cultural policy, with the Museums Association's (2008) document 'Sustainability and museums: your chance to make a difference' again focusing on 'Economic, environmental and social' concerns (5). Aspects of what could be considered cultural sustainability are included in their 'Principles for sustainable museums', such as the need to 'Acknowledge the legacy contributed by previous generations and pass on a better legacy of collections, information and knowledge to the next generation' (Museums Association 2016). However, the methods of measuring sustainability in their 'Sustainability Checklist' remain rooted in attributing objectives and targets to 'the three main aspects of sustainable development', which are considered to be 'social, economic, and environmental' concerns (2016).

It is arguable that cultural sustainability concerns are innate within the practices of museums and libraries, and as a result do not need further coverage in sustainability policy. Indeed, as the Museum Association's 'Museums Change Lives' report suggests, initiatives working towards 'improving lives, creating better places and helping to advance society' are built on 'the traditional role of preserving collections and connecting audiences with them'(2013, 3). However, such an approach continues to value the role that organisations play in sustaining culture according to wider 'social outcomes and impact' (3), rather than according to its own merit.

Sustaining culture may be central to the work of museums and libraries, yet cultural sustainability is rarely considered as a definitive outcome within sustainability research and policy within the sector. The role that museums and libraries play within sustainable development continues to be valued according to its social, economic, and environmental impact, perpetuating the notion that culture can only be valued according to its ancillary benefits. This denies organisations the opportunity to be valued according to their unique contributions to sustainable development that explicit recognition of cultural sustainability as an equal pillar would allow.

Encouraging steps have however been made within recent museum research. Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014) provide a theoretical model by which the sustainable development of museums can be assessed according to all four areas of sustainability, with a particular focus on identifying gaps in the 'parameters of cultural sustainability'(566). These parameters are 'constructed on the basis of the broad discussions of culture as a fourth pillar of sustainable development... the recommendations of museum associations and the most recent debates about multiculturalism, inclusion and community participation' (569-570). The aim of this model is to provide a list of the key responsibilities of museums within the cultural sustainability sphere, and these are broken down into seven separate areas, which are described as 'Heritage preservation', 'Cultural skills and knowledge', 'Memory/identity', 'New audiences/inclusion,

‘Cultural diversity/intercultural dialogue, ‘Creativity/innovation’, and ‘Artistic vitality’ (570).

Stylianou-Lambert et al conducted their research across the museums sector in Cyprus, and the model was developed in order to aid cultural policy-makers in identifying ‘weaknesses or gaps’ in particular areas of cultural sustainability within different museum environments (Stylianou-Lambert, Boukas, and Christodoulou-Yarali 2014, 572). For example, the research found state museums to ‘place their emphasis on heritage preservation, the passing on of specialized cultural skills and knowledge, as well as the construction of public memory and a sense of national identity’. However, they were considered less active in ‘the development of new audiences, the representation of cultural diversity, as well as creativity, innovation, and artistic vitality’, which would suggest that policy would need to be amended in order to encourage development within these areas (582).

This study marks a significant move away from the use of the triple bottom line approach, to include cultural sustainability as an equal concern within sustainable development models for museums. Further replications of this study are however required in other countries as well as in other cultural heritage organisations such as libraries. In addition, a range of linked studies might support the development of a better understanding as to how cultural sustainability might be delivered in different contexts. This would seem vital to generate greater understanding of the different pressures affecting the sustainability of cultural heritage within the diverse institutional contexts explored earlier in this article.

Furthermore, the focus of the model devised by Stylianou-Lambert et al is upon developing ‘broader (external) cultural policies’ (Stylianou-Lambert, Boukas, and Christodoulou-Yarali 2014, 569), rather than on internal practices within museums and how these may need to be adapted in order for organisations to demonstrate their contributions to wider cultural sustainability agendas. Without detailed consideration of cultural sustainability at practice level, and the development of ‘milestones, benchmarks or measurement facilities’ in order to ‘assist institutions in assessing their progress towards sustainability’, many organisations find ‘the practical application of holistic sustainability principles to their operations challenging’ (Adams 2010, 26-29). In consequence, whilst such policies may aim to help institutions demonstrate their value to wider society, the translation of policy into practice remains problematic, and as has previously been the case with the triple bottom line, may lead to organisations failing to include it as ‘a core part of their work and planning’ (Museums Association 2009, 5).

Adams (2010) attempts to address this issue and draws on existing publications and governmental guidelines within the sustainable development field in order to develop a set of indicators for use within museums that

incorporates all four pillars. The benefit of this model is that it provides museums with clear actions in order to work towards sustainability. For example, in terms of increasing environmental sustainability, it is suggested that organisations review their total water use and non-renewable energy use over twelve months, as well as the ratio of waste recycled to waste sent to land fill over the same period (46). The overall sustainability goals are also specific to the organisations themselves, with, for example, the economic goal being defined as 'To have a balanced and diverse budget' (46). In comparison to the policy focused model of Stylianou-Lambert et al (2014,570), which includes 'Cultural tourism' and 'Economic revitalization' of the local community as the key parameters of museums' role within economic sustainability, the development of such specific goals and indicators as provided by Adams can help towards making sustainability more relevant and manageable to practitioners at an organisational level.

However, whilst Adams' (2010) model includes cultural sustainability as an equal concern alongside the triple bottom line, it does not adequately address the complex nature of culture, or fully explore the role that museums play. The main cultural sustainability goal for museums is defined as being 'to hold the collection in perpetuity and maintain its quality'. The suggested core indicators for doing so focus on conservation measures, such as the 'Proportion of collection surveyed for conservation in the last 12 months', or the increasing or decreasing percentage of items within the collection that rate highly in terms of condition (46). It is clear, however, that cultural sustainability and the role that museums as well as libraries play within it is far more complex than the preservation of cultural artefacts. As explored earlier in this article, museums and libraries are organisations that often have complicated links to the cultural history of their local communities; maintaining historic buildings, hosting a diverse range of cultural events, offering a wide variety of opportunities for research, and providing cultural inspiration to academics, artists, writers and the general public alike. If the full extent of the cultural value of organisations is to be harnessed for the purpose of expressing contributions to cultural sustainability, then models and indicators need to be developed that more fully reflect the diverse and complex nature of this role.

Proposals for future research and development

For museums and libraries to receive adequate recognition of their unique value in sustaining culture, it is imperative that the concept of cultural sustainability is more fully introduced and developed within cultural policy context and is considered as central rather than subsidiary to other sustainability concerns. However, further research is first required so that the value of the role that museums and libraries play in sustaining culture can be articulated in greater depth than the criteria currently provided by broader sustainable development agendas, and with greater breadth beyond preservation and conservation practices. Such research could enable the contributions of museums and

libraries to cultural sustainability to be more adequately expressed within sustainability policies, thus enabling wider appreciation of the value of these organisations to society. This would seem especially necessary within the library sector, where the role of organisations in sustaining culture is often not as immediately discernible as it is in museums and has consequently remained comparatively underexplored.

To achieve a deeper understanding of the role that museums and libraries play within cultural sustainability, it will be necessary to revise sustainability models. Models so far have concentrated on reflecting external sustainability concerns, which consider environmental, social, economic, and cultural concerns to be equally weighted. However, as the main strengths of these organisations lie in sustaining culture, it could perhaps be more productive to consider their role in sustainability first and foremost according to their role in cultural sustainability. This would not only ensure that their full value in sustaining culture is recognised and harnessed for the purposes of cultural sustainability but would also help to make sustainability seem more relevant to museum and library professionals, who sometimes struggle to understand the applicability of sustainable development concepts to their organisations (Museums Association 2009).

Rather than seeing all four dimensions of sustainability as equal pillars within the museum or library environment, it may in fact be beneficial to utilise sustainability models to consider how social, economic, and environmental structures within these organisations work to support their cultural contributions (Figure 3). In terms of social structures, it could be helpful to investigate the role of governing bodies, staff, the community, and other external bodies that play a supportive role through associations, partnerships, and collaborations in sustaining the cultural value of individual organisations. Economic considerations would include an investigation of funding and income streams, ways of reducing costs, and the development of business strategies in order to make the cultural contributions of organisations more economically sustainable. Lastly, environmental concerns would focus on the physical conditions and processes required for the conservation of collections, archives, and buildings, and providing the environment necessary for the physical survival of cultural heritage assets within organisations.

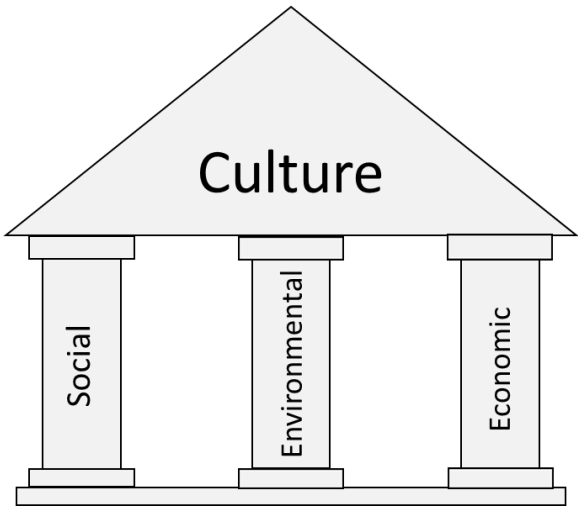


Figure 3: Re-imagining the four pillars: social, economic, and environmental structures supporting museums and libraries in sustaining culture

Such a model would still need to be informed by external sustainability concerns, as organisations would still bear a responsibility towards wider society, but it would enable sustainable development concerns to be better aligned with the strength of museums and libraries in sustaining culture. This alternative perspective could also help to highlight any conflicts that may exist between organisations' cultural missions and wider sustainability goals. For example, environmental considerations would need to incorporate both a concern for the conservation needs of collections as well as for wider responsibilities to the natural environment, which owing to collection conservation practices not always being eco-friendly, can often be opposed to each other. Trying to find ways to resolve these issues could help to make the application of sustainability measures more practicable within museum and library environments, and again help to increase the uptake of sustainability within the core strategies of organisations.

Conclusion

This article has explored the use of sustainable development concepts within cultural policy to provide justification of the value of museums and libraries to society. It argues that whilst cultural sustainability has become an increasing concern in wider sustainable development agendas, it has not yet been given adequate coverage within sustainability policy and research in museums and libraries. As a result, the work of these institutions in sustaining culture continues to be valued according to its instrumental role in social, economic, and environmental sustainability, rather than according to its intrinsic cultural value.

Museums and libraries have an inherent investment in sustaining and promoting culture, and the growing concern for cultural sustainability provides a compelling perspective from which they can re-establish an understanding of

how crucial their work is to society. Formulating sustainability policies for museums and libraries that include cultural sustainability as an equal concern alongside their commitments to social, economic, and environmental impact would help to develop understanding of this role and appreciation of the unique value of these institutions to society, thus helping to secure their future.

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Appendix 14: Conference abstracts

A)

Presented at the Greenlines Institute 5th International Conference on Heritage and Sustainable Development, 12-15 July 2016, The University of Lisbon

'More than 'just a load of old books': sustaining heritage in the UK independent library sector'

Independent libraries are an important aspect of British heritage. Their collections provide fascinating insights into their users' interests over many centuries, and their buildings are often historic landmarks that provide a unique cultural and social space for their communities. However, financial instability and a lack of strategic planning has left the future of independent libraries and their heritage at risk. Museums have adopted sustainability concepts to develop a holistic approach to assessing the sustainability of their institutions. The research reported in this paper seeks to adapt and advance sustainability frameworks from the museums sector, to provide a holistic framework that supports independent libraries in sustaining their heritage. This paper focuses on the initial phase of desk research. It profiles the cultural assets of the member libraries of the Association of Independent Libraries (UK), to establish an evidence base for seeking to manage their sustainability.

B)

Presented at the 4th Annual HSSR Student Symposium, 13 May 2016, Manchester Metropolitan University

'More than just a load of old books: sustaining heritage in the independent library sector'

Independent libraries form an important part of our cultural heritage, preserving rich collections of cultural assets built up over many generations, and having strong links to the communities in which they exist. However, many of these libraries remain relatively unknown and, owing to the fact that they tend to be self-reliant with regard to funding, they face a continued struggle to secure the future of their organisations and the cultural heritage that they seek to maintain.

The aim of this research is therefore to provide independent libraries with recommendations to enhance their sustainability. In order to achieve this, the research will:

- Review the literature surrounding the sustainability of libraries and other cultural heritage organisations
- Conduct desk research to review the assets of independent libraries and establish the baseline for the study
- Undertake interviews in order to explore and distil the perceived challenges, opportunities, and innovations within the sector
- Identify libraries that provide key examples of success and analyse them as case studies
- Integrate insights from each stage in order to develop a model of best practice

With previous research within the sector tending to focus upon the histories of organisations, this research will be innovative in providing a holistic focus upon their future development. By including libraries from both the UK and the USA within the research sample, new cross-cultural comparisons will be enabled between organisations that hitherto existed in isolation from each other. This has potential to lead to further collaboration between institutions across the Atlantic.

C)

Presented at the 2016 Independent Libraries Association's annual conference, 10-12 June, Bromley House Library, Nottingham and at the 2016 International Conference of Independent Libraries and Mechanics' Institutes, 3-7 November, The Mechanics' Institute Library, San Francisco

'The Portrait of a Library: a comparison of independent libraries in the UK and USA'

Independent libraries are an important aspect of the heritage of both British and American communities. The collections that they preserve provide fascinating insights into the interests of their users over many centuries, their buildings are often historical landmarks, and they continue to provide an essential cultural and social space for their communities to this day. However, a number of factors, including a continued struggle for financial stability and a lack of research or planning into their future development, mean that many of these institutions are not sustainable. Consequently, the future of their heritage is at risk.

The majority of independent libraries in the UK and USA share similar origins, having been founded as subscription libraries or mechanics' institutes in the 18th and 19th centuries. Many continue to operate according to the principles of a membership library, under similar systems of management and with similar organisational missions. However, despite these similarities, independent libraries in the UK and USA have existed in relative isolation from each other,

and there have been limited opportunities for the exchange of knowledge and ideas between professionals across the Atlantic.

My research aims to elucidate the issues faced by independent libraries by building a contextual and cultural comparison between British and American institutions. The insights generated will then be integrated into a larger research project considering the sustainability of independent libraries. This presentation will focus on the comparative element of the study and will consider the similarities and differences in the ways that independent libraries have evolved in the UK and USA, the challenges they face, and their plans for future development.